

CLIO & THE CHÂTEAU
DE VAUX-LE-VICOMTE
BY ANATOLE FRANCE



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THE WORKS OF ANATOLE FRANCE
IN AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION
EDITED BY JAMES LEWIS MAY

CLIO AND THE CHÂTEAU
DE VAUX-LE-VICOMTE



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BY ANATOLE FRANCE

TRANSLATED BY
WINIFRED STEPHENS



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TO
ÉMILE ZOLA

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NOTE BY THE EDITOR

The Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte is a translation of a sumptuously illustrated volume descriptive of this wonderful monument of human frailty and ambition, published in 1888 by Lemercier et Cie., with plates by Rodolphe Pfnor. Although the text has not been published apart from the plates in France, it seemed only fitting to include a translation of *The Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte* in a complete edition of Monsieur Anatole France's works.

CLIO

THE BARD OF KYME



LONG the hill-side he came, following a path which skirted the sea. His forehead was bare, deeply furrowed and bound with a fillet of red wool. The sea-breeze blew his white locks over his temples. The fleece of a snow-white beard thickly fringed his chin. His tunic and his unshod feet were the colour of the roads which he had trodden for so many years. A roughly made lyre hung at his side. He was known as the Aged One, and also as the Bard. Yet another name was given him by the children to whom he taught poetry and music, and many called him the Blind One, because his eyes, dim with age, were overhung by swollen lids, reddened by the smoke of the hearths beside which he was wont to sit when he sang. But his was no eternal night, and he was said to see things invisible to other men. For three generations he had been wandering ceaselessly to and fro. And now, having sung all day to a King of Ægea, he was returning to his home, the roof of which he could already see smoking in the distance ;

for now, after walking all night without a halt for fear of being overtaken by the heat of the day, in the clear light of the dawn he could see the white Kyme, his birthplace. With his dog at his side, leaning on his crooked staff, he walked with slow steps, his body upright, his head held high, because of the steepness of the way leading down into the narrow valley and because, though aged, he was still vigorous. The sun, rising over the mountains of Asia, shed a rosy light over the fleecy clouds and the hill-sides of the islands that studded the sea. The coast-line glistened. But the hills that stretched away eastward, crowned with mastic and terebinth, still lay in the freshness and the shadow of night.

The Aged One measured along the incline the length of twelve times twelve lances and found, on the left, between the flanks of twin rocks, the narrow entrance to a sacred wood. There, on the brink of a spring, rose an altar of unhewn stones.

It was half hidden by an oleander the branches of which were laden with dazzling blossoms. The well-trodden ground in front of the altar was white with the bones of victims. All around, the boughs of the olive-trees were hung with offerings. And farther on, in the awesome shadow of the gorge, rose two ancient oaks, bearing, nailed to their trunks, the bleached skulls of bulls. Knowing that this altar was consecrated to Phœbus, the Aged One

plunged into the wood, and, taking by its handle a little earthenware cup which hung from his belt, he bent over the stream which, flowing over a bed of wild parsley and water-cress, slowly wound its way down to the meadow. He filled his cup with the spring-water, and, because he was pious, before drinking he poured a few drops before the altar. He worshipped the immortal gods, who know neither pain nor death, while on earth generation follows generation of suffering men. He was conscious of fear ; and he dreaded the arrows of Leto's sons. Full of sorrows and of years, he loved the light of day and feared death. For this reason an idea occurred to him. He bent the pliable trunk of a sapling, and drawing it towards him hung his earthenware cup from the topmost twig of the young tree, which, springing back, bore the old man's offering up to the open sky.

White Kyme, wall-encircled, rose from the edge of the sea. A steep highway, paved with flat stones, led to the gate of the town. This gate had been built in an age beyond man's memory, and it was said to be the work of the gods. Carved upon the lintel were signs which no man understood, yet they were regarded as of good omen. Not far from this gate was the public square, where the benches of the elders shone beneath the trees. Near this square, on the landward side, the Aged One stayed

his steps. There was his house. It was low and little, and less beautiful than the neighbouring house, where a famous seer dwelt with his children. Its entrance was half hidden beneath a heap of manure, in which a pig was rooting. This dunghill was smaller than those at the doors of the rich. But behind the house was an orchard, and stables of unquarried stone, which the Aged One had built with his own hands. The sun was climbing up the white vault of heaven, the sea wind had fallen. The invisible fire in the air scorched the lungs of men and beasts. For a moment the Aged One paused upon the threshold to wipe the sweat from his brow with the back of his hand. His dog, with watchful eye and hanging tongue, stood still and panted.

The aged Melantho, emerging from the house, appeared on the threshold and spoke a few pleasant words. Her coming had been slow, because a god had sent an evil spirit into her legs which swelled them and made them heavier than a couple of wineskins. She was a Carian slave and in her youth the King had bestowed her on the bard, who was then young and vigorous. And in her new master's bed she had conceived many children. But not one was left in the house. Some were dead, others had gone away to practise the art of song or to steer the plough in distant Achaian cities, for all were richly gifted. And Melantho was left alone in the house

with Areta, her daughter-in-law, and Areta's two children.

She went with the master into the great hall with its smoky rafters. In the midst of it, before the domestic altar, lay the hearthstone covered with red embers and melted fat. Out of the hall opened two stories of small rooms ; a wooden staircase led to the upper chambers, which were the women's quarters. Against the pillars that supported the roof leant the bronze weapons which the Aged One had borne in his youth, in the days when he followed the kings to the cities to which they drove in their chariots to recapture the daughters of Kyme whom the heroes had carried away. From one of the beams hung the skin of an ox.

The elders of the city, wishful to honour the bard, had sent it to him on the previous day. He rejoiced at the sight of it. As he stood drawing a long breath into a chest which was shrunken with age, he took from beneath his tunic, with a few cloves of garlic remaining from his alfresco supper, the King of Ægea's gift ; it was a stone fallen from heaven and precious, for it was of iron, though too small for a lance-tip. He brought with him also a pebble which he had found on the road. On this pebble, when looked at in a certain light, was the form of a man's head. And the Aged One, showing it to Melantho, said :

“Woman, see, on this pebble is the likeness of Pakoros, the blacksmith ; not without permission of the gods may a stone thus present the semblance of Pakoros.”

And when the aged Melantho had poured water over his feet and hands in order to remove the dust that defiled them, he grasped the shin of beef in his arms, placed it on the altar and began to tear it asunder. Being wise and prudent, he did not delegate to women or to children the duty of preparing the repast ; and, after the manner of kings, he himself cooked the flesh of beasts.

Meanwhile Melantho coaxed the fire on the hearth into a flame. She blew upon the dry twigs until a god wrapped them in fire. Though the task was holy, the Aged One suffered it to be performed by a woman because years and fatigue had enfeebled him. When the flames leapt up he cast into them pieces of flesh which he turned over with a fork of bronze. Seated on his heels, he inhaled the smoke ; and as it filled the room his eyes smarted and watered ; but he paid no heed because he was accustomed to it and because the smoke signified abundance. As the toughness of the meat yielded to the fire's irresistible power, he put fragments of it into his mouth and, slowly masticating them with his well-worn teeth, ate in silence. Standing at his side, the aged Melantho poured the dark wine into

an earthenware cup like that which he had given to the god.

When he had satisfied hunger and thirst, he inquired whether all in house and stable was well. And he inquired concerning the wool woven in his absence, the cheese placed in the vat and the ripe olives in the press. And, remembering that his goods were but few, he said :

“ The heroes keep herds of oxen and heifers in the meadows. They have a goodly number of strong and comely slaves ; the doors of their houses are of ivory and of brass, and their tables are laden with pitchers of gold. The courage of their hearts assured them of wealth, which they sometimes keep until old age. In my youth, certes, I was not inferior to them in courage, but I had neither horses nor chariots, nor servants, nor even armour strong enough to vie with them in battle and to win tripods of gold and women of great beauty. He who fights on foot with poor weapons cannot kill many enemies, because he himself fears death. Wherefore, fighting beneath the town walls, in the ranks, with the serving men, never did I win rich spoil.”

The aged Melantho made answer :

“ War giveth wealth to men and robs them of it. My father, Kyphos, had a palace and countless herds at Mylata. But armed men despoiled him of all

and slew him. I myself was carried away into slavery, but I was never ill-treated because I was young. The chiefs took me to their bed and never did I lack food. You were my best master and the poorest."

There was neither joy nor sadness in her voice as she spoke.

The Aged One replied :

"Melantho, you cannot complain of me, for I have always treated you kindly. Reproach me not with having failed to win great wealth. Armourers are there and blacksmiths who are rich. Those who are skilled in the construction of chariots derive no small advantage from their labours. Seers receive great gifts. But the life of minstrels is hard."

The aged Melantho said :

"The life of many men is hard."

And with heavy step she went out of the house, with her daughter-in-law, to fetch wood from the cellar. It was the hour when the sun's invincible heat prostrates men and beasts, and in the motionless foliage hushes even the song of the birds. The Aged One stretched himself upon a mat, and, veiling his face, fell asleep.

As he slumbered he was visited by a succession of dreams, which were neither more beautiful nor more unusual than those which he dreamed every day. In these dreams appeared to him the forms of men

and of beasts. And, because among them he recognized some whom he had known while they lived on the green earth and who having lost the light of day had lain beneath the funeral pile, he concluded that the shades of the dead hover in the air, but that, having lost their vigour, they are nothing but empty shadows. He learned from dreams that there exist likewise shades of animals and of plants which are seen in sleep. He was convinced that the dead, wandering in Hades, themselves form their own image, since none may form it for them, unless it were one of those gods who love to deceive man's feeble intellect. But, being no seer, he could not distinguish between false dreams and true; and, weary of seeking to understand the confused visions of the night, he regarded them with indifference as they passed beneath his closed eyelids.

On awakening, he beheld, ranged before him in an attitude of respect, the children of Kyme, whom he instructed in poetry and music, as his father had instructed him. Among them were his daughter-in-law's two sons. Many of them were blind, for a bard's life was deemed fitting for those who, bereft of sight, could neither work in the fields nor follow heroes to war.

In their hands they bore offerings in payment for the bard's lessons, fruit, cheese, a honeycomb, a sheep's fleece, and they waited for their master's

approval before placing them on the domestic altar.

The Aged One, having risen and taken his lyre which hung from a beam in the hall, said kindly :

“Children, it is just that the rich should give much and the poor less. Zeus, our father, hath unequally apportioned wealth among men. But he will punish the child who withholds the tribute due to the divine bard.”

The vigilant Melantho came and took the gifts from the altar. And the Aged One, having tuned his lyre, began to teach a song to the children, who with crossed legs were seated on the ground around him.

“Hearken,” he said, “to the combat between Patrocles and Sarpedon. This is a beautiful song.”

And he sang. He skilfully modulated the sounds, applying the same rhythm and the same measure to each line ; and, in order that his voice should not wander from the key, he supported it at regular intervals by striking a note upon his three-stringed lyre. And, before making a necessary pause, he uttered a shrill cry, accompanied by a strident vibration of strings. After he had sung lines equal in number to double the number of fingers on his two hands, he made the children repeat them. They cried them out all together in a high voice, as, following their master’s example, they touched the

little lyres which they themselves had carved out of wood and which gave no sound.

Patiently the Aged One sang the lines over and over until the little singers knew every word. The attentive children he praised, but those who lacked memory or intelligence he struck with the wooden part of his lyre, and they went away to lean weeping against a pillar of the hall. He taught by example, not by precept, because he believed poesy to be of hoary antiquity and beyond man's judgment. The only counsels that he gave related to manners. He bade them :

“ Honour kings and heroes, who are superior to other men. Call heroes by their own name and that of their father, so that these names be not forgotten. When you sit in assemblies gather your tunic about you and let your mien express grace and modesty.”

Again he said to them :

“ Do not spit in rivers, because rivers are sacred. Make no change, either through weakness of memory or of your own imagining, in the songs I teach you, and when a king shall say unto you : ‘ These songs are beautiful. From whom did you learn them ? ’ You shall answer : ‘ I learnt them from the Aged One of Kyme, who received them from his father, whom doubtless a god had inspired.’ ”

Of the ox's shin, there yet remained a few succu-

lent morsels. Having eaten one of them before the hearth and smashed the bone with an axe of bronze, in order to extract the marrow, of which he alone in the house was worthy to partake, he divided the rest of the meat into portions which should nourish the women and children for the space of two days.

Then he realized that soon nothing would be left of this nutritious food, and he reflected :

“ The rich are loved by Zeus and the poor are not. All unwittingly I have doubtless offended one of those gods who live concealed in the forests or the mountains, or perhaps the child of an immortal ; and it is to expiate my involuntary crime that I drag out my days in a penurious old age. Sometimes, without any evil intention, one commits actions which are punishable because the gods have not clearly revealed unto men that which is permitted and that which is forbidden. And their will remains obscure.” Long did he turn over those thoughts in his mind, and, fearing the return of cruel hunger, he resolved not to remain idly in his dwelling that night, but this time to go towards the country where the Hermos flows between rocks and whence can be seen Orneia, Smyrna and the beautiful Hissia, lying upon the mountain, which, like the prow of some Phœnician boat, plunges into the sea. Wherefore, at the hour when the first stars glimmer in the pale sky, he girded himself with the

cord of his lyre and went forth, along the sea-shore, toward the dwellings of rich men, who, during their lengthy feasts, love to hearken to the praise of heroes and the genealogies of the gods.

Having, according to his custom, journeyed all night, in the rosy dawn of morning he descried a town perched upon a high headland, and he recognized the opulent Hissia, dove-haunted, which from the summit of her rock looks down upon the white islands sporting like nymphs in the glistening sea. Not far from the town, on the margin of a spring, he sat down to rest and to appease his hunger with the onions which he had brought in a fold of his tunic.

Hardly had he finished his meal when a young girl, bearing a basket on her head, came to the spring to wash linen. At first she looked at him suspiciously, but, seeing that he carried a wooden lyre slung over his torn tunic and that he was old and overcome with fatigue, she approached him fearlessly, and, suddenly, seized with pity and veneration, she filled the hollows of her hands with drops of water with which she moistened the minstrel's lips.

Then he called her a king's daughter ; he promised her a long life, and said :

“ Maiden, desire floats in a cloud about thy girdle. Happy the man who shall lead thee to his couch.

And I, an old man, praise thy beauty like the bird of night which cries all unheeded upon the nuptial roof. I am a wandering bard. Daughter, speak unto me pleasant words."

And the maiden answered :

"If, as you say and as it seemeth, you are a musician, then no evil fate brings you to this town. For the rich Meges to-day receiveth a guest who is dear to him ; and to the great of the town, in honour of his guest, he giveth a sumptuous feast. Doubtless he would wish them to hear a good minstrel. Go to him. From this very spot you may see his house. From the seaward side it cannot be approached, because it is on that high breeze-swept headland, which juts out into the waves. But if you enter the town on the landward side, by the steps cut in the rock, which lead up the vine-clad hill, you will easily distinguish from all the other houses the abode of Meges. It has been recently whitewashed, and it is more spacious than the rest."

And the Aged One, rising with difficulty on limbs which the years had stiffened, climbed the steps cut in the rock by the men of old, and, reaching the high table-land whereon is the town of Hissia, he readily distinguished the house of the rich Meges.

To approach it was pleasant, for the blood of freshly slaughtered bulls gushed from its doors and the odour of hot fat was perceptible all around.

He crossed the threshold, entered the great banquetting-hall and, having touched the altar with his hand, approached Meges, who was carving the meat and ordering the servants. Already the guests were ranged about the hearth, rejoicing in the prospect of a plenteous repast. Among them were many kings and heroes. But the guest whom Meges desired to honour by this banquet was a King of Chios, who, in quest of wealth, had long navigated the seas and endured great hardship. His name was Oeneus. All the guests admired him because, like Ulysses in earlier days, he had escaped from innumerable shipwrecks, shared in the islands the couch of enchantresses and brought home great treasure. He told of his travels and his labours, interspersing them with inventions, for he had a nimble wit.

Recognizing the bard by the lyre which hung at his side, the rich Meges addressed the Aged One and said :

“ Be welcome. What songs knowest thou ? ”

The Aged One made answer :

“ I know ‘ The Strife of Kings ’ which brought such great disaster to the Achaians, I know ‘ The Storming of the Wall.’ And that song is beautiful. I know also ‘ The Deception of Zeus,’ ‘ The Embassy ’ and ‘ The Capture of the Dead.’ And these songs are beautiful. I know yet more—six times sixty very beautiful songs.”

Thus did he give it to be understood that he knew many songs ; but the exact number he could not tell.

The rich Meges replied in a mocking tone :

“ In the hope of a good meal and a rich gift, wandering minstrels ever say that they know many songs ; but, put to the test, it is soon seen that they remember but a few lines, with the constant repetition of which they tire the ears of heroes and of kings.”

The Aged One answered wisely :

“ Meges,” he said, “ you are renowned for your wealth. Learn that the number of the songs I know is not less than that of the bulls and heifers which your herdsmen drive to graze on the mountain.”

Meges, admiring the Old Man’s intelligence, said to him kindly :

“ A small mind would not suffice to contain so great a number of songs. But, tell me, is what thou knowest about Achilles and Ulysses really true ? For many are the lies in circulation touching those heroes.”

And the bard made answer :

“ All that I know of the heroes I received from my father, who learned it from the Muses themselves, for in earlier days in cave and forest the immortal Muses visited divine singers. No inventions will I mingle with the ancient tales.”

Thus did he speak, and wisely. Nevertheless, to the songs he had known from his youth upward he was wont to add lines taken from other songs or the fruit of his own imagination. He himself had composed wellnigh the whole of certain songs. But, fearing lest man should disapprove of them, he did not confess them to be his own work. The heroes preferred the ancient tales which they believed to have been dictated by a god, and they objected to new songs. Wherefore, when he repeated lines of his own invention, he carefully concealed their origin. And, as he was a true poet and followed all the ancient traditions, his lines differed in no way from those of his ancestors ; they resembled them in form and in beauty, and, from the beginning, they were worthy of immortal glory.

The rich Meges was not unintelligent. Perceiving the Aged One to be a good singer, he gave him a place of honour by the hearth and said to him :

“ Old Man, when we have satisfied our hunger, thou shalt sing to us all thou knowest of Achilles and Ulysses. Endeavour to charm the ears of Oeneus, my guest, for he is a hero full of wisdom.”

And Oeneus, who had long wandered over the sea, asked the minstrel whether he knew “ The Voyages of Ulysses.” But the return of the heroes who had fought at Troy was still wrapped in mystery, and no

one knew what Ulysses had suffered in his wanderings over the pathless sea.

The Old Man answered :

“ I know that the divine Ulysses shared Circe’s couch and deceived the Cyclops by a crafty wile. Women tell tales about it to one another. But the hero’s return to Ithaca is hidden from the bards. Some say that he returned to possess his wife and his goods, others that he put away Penelope because she had admitted her suitors to her bed, and that he himself, punished by the gods, wandered ceaselessly among the people, an oar upon his shoulder.”

Oeneus replied :

“ In my travels I have heard that Ulysses died at the hands of his son.”

Meanwhile Meges distributed the flesh of oxen among his guests. And to each one he gave a fitting morsel. Oeneus praised him loudly.

“ Meges,” he said, “ one can see that you are accustomed to give banquets.”

The oxen of Meges were fed upon the sweet-smelling herbs which grow on the mountain-side. Their flesh was redolent thereof, and the heroes could not consume enough of it. And, as Meges was constantly refilling a capacious goblet which he afterwards passed to his guests, the repast was prolonged far into the day. No man remembered so rich a feast.

The sun was going down into the sea, when the herdsmen who kept the flocks of Meges upon the mountain came to receive their share of the wine and victuals. Meges respected them because they grazed the herds not with the indolence of the herdsmen of the plain, but armed with lances of iron and girded with armour in order to defend the oxen against the attacks of the people of Asia. And they were like unto kings and heroes, whom they equalled in courage. They were led by two chiefs, Peiros and Thoas, whom the master had chosen as the bravest and the most intelligent. And, indeed, handsomer men were not to be seen. Meges welcomed them to his hearth as the illustrious protectors of his wealth. He gave them wine and meat as much as they desired.

Oeneus, admiring them, said to his host :

“ In all my travels, I have never seen men with limbs so well formed and muscular as those of these two master herdsmen.”

Then Meges uttered injudicious words. He said :

“ Peiros is the stronger in wrestling, but Thoas the swifter in the race.”

At these words, the two herdsmen looked angrily at one another, and Thoas said to Peiros :

“ You must have given the master some maddening drink to make him say that you are the better wrestler.”

Then Peiros answered Thoas testily :

“ I flatter myself that I can conquer you in wrestling. As for racing, I leave to you the palm which the master has given. For you who have the heart of a stag could not fail to possess his feet.”

But the wise Oeneus checked the herdsmen's quarrel. He artfully told tales showing the danger of wrangling at feasts. And, as he spoke well, he was approved. Peace having been restored, Meges said to the Aged One :

“ My friend, sing us ‘ The Wrath of Achilles ’ and ‘ The Gathering of the Kings.’ ”

And the Aged One, having tuned his lyre, poured forth into the thick atmosphere of the hall great gusts of sound.

He drew deep breaths, and all the guests hearkened in silence to the measured words which recalled ages worthy to be remembered. And many marvelled how so old a man, one withered by age like a vine-branch which beareth neither fruit nor leaves, could emit such powerful notes. For they did not understand that the strength of the wine and the habit of singing imparted to the musician a vigour which otherwise enfeebled nerve and muscle would have denied him.

At intervals a murmur of praise rose from the assembly like a strong gust of wind in the forest. But suddenly the herdsmen's dispute, appeased for

a while, broke out afresh. Heated with wine, they challenged one another to wrestle and to race. Their wild cries rose above the musician's voice, and vainly he endeavoured to make the harmonious sounds which proceeded from his mouth and his lyre heard by the assembly. The herdsmen who followed Peiros and Thoas, flushed with wine, struck their hands and grunted like hogs. They had long formed themselves into rival bands which shared the chiefs' enmity.

"Dog!" cried Thoas.

And he struck Peiros a blow on the face which drew blood from his mouth and nostrils. Peiros, blinded, butted with his forehead against the chest of Thoas and threw him backwards, his ribs broken. Straightway the rival herdsmen cast themselves upon one another, exchanging blows and insults.

In vain did Meges and the Kings endeavour to separate the combatants. Even the wise Oeneus himself was repulsed by the herdsmen whom a god had bereft of reason. Brass vessels flew through the air on all sides. Great ox-bones, smoking torches, bronze tripods rose and fell upon the combatants. The interlaced bodies of men rolled over the hearth on which the fire was dying, in the midst of the liquor which flowed from the burst wine-skins.

Dense darkness enveloped the hall, a darkness full of groans and imprecations. Arms, maddened by

frenzy, seized glowing logs and hurled them into the darkness. A blazing twig struck the minstrel as he stood still and silent.

Then a voice louder than all the noise of combat cursed these impious men and this profane house. And, pressing his lyre to his breast, he went out of the dwelling and walked along the high headland by the sea. To his wrath had given place a great feeling of fatigue and a bitter disgust with men and with life.

A longing for union with the gods filled his breast. All things lay wrapped in soft shadows, the friendly silence and the peace of night. Westward, over the land which men say is haunted by the shades of the dead, the divine moon, hanging in the clear sky, shed silver blossoms upon the smiling sea. And the aged Homer advanced over the high headland until the earth, which had borne him so long, failed beneath his feet.

KOMM OF THE ATREBATES

I



IN a land of mists, near a shore which was beaten by the restless sea and swept by billowy waves of sand raised by the Ocean winds, the Atrebates had settled on the shifting banks of a broad stream. There, amid pools of water and in forests of oak and of birch, they lived protected by their stockades of felled tree-trunks. There they bred horses excellent for draught-work, large-headed, short-necked, broad-chested and muscular, and with powerful haunches. On the outskirts of the forest they kept huge swine, wild as boars. With their great dogs they hunted wild beasts, the skulls of which they nailed on to the walls of their wooden houses. They lived on the flesh of these creatures and on fish, both of the salt-water and the fresh. They grilled their meat and seasoned it with salt, vinegar and cumin. They drank wine, and, at their gargantuan feasts, seated at their round tables, they grew drunken. There were among them women who, acquainted with the virtue of herbs, gathered henbane, vervain and that healing plant

called savin, which grows in the moist hollows of rocks. From the sap of the yew-tree they concocted a poison. The Atrebates had also priests and poets who knew things hidden from ordinary men.

These forest-dwellers, these men of the marsh and the beach, were of high stature. They wore their fair hair long, and they wrapped their great white bodies in mantles of wool of the colour of the vine-leaf when it grows purple in the autumn. They were subject to chiefs who held sway over the tribes.

The Atrebates knew that the Romans had come to make war on the peoples of Gaul, and that whole nations with all their possessions had been sold beneath the lance. News of happenings on the Rhone and the Loire had reached them speedily. Words and signs fly like birds. And that which, at sunrise, had been said in Genabum of the Carnutes was heard in the first watch of the night on the Ocean strand. But the fate of their brethren did not trouble them, or rather, being jealous of them, they rejoiced in the sufferings which they endured at Cæsar's hand. They did not hate the Romans, for they did not know them. Neither did they fear them, since it seemed to them impossible for an army to penetrate through the forests and marshes which surrounded their dwellings. They had no towns, although they gave the name to Nemetacum,

a vast enclosure encircled by a palisade, which, in case of attack, served as a refuge for warriors, women and herds. As we have said, they had throughout their country other similar places of refuge, but these were smaller. To them, also, they gave the name of towns.

It was not upon their enclosures of felled trees that they relied for resistance to the Romans, whom they knew to be skilled in the capture of cities defended by stone walls and wooden towers. But they relied rather on their country's lack of roads. The Roman soldiers, however, themselves constructed the roads over which they marched. They dug the ground with a strength and rapidity unknown to the Gauls of the dense forest, among whom iron was rarer than gold. And one day the Atrebates were astounded to learn that the Roman road, with its milestones and its fine paved highway, was approaching their thickets and marshes. Then they made alliance with the people scattered through the forest which they called the Impenetrable, and numerous tribes entered into a league against Cæsar. The chiefs of the Atrebates uttered their war-cry, girded themselves with their baldrics of gold and of coral, donned their helmets adorned with the antlers of the stag, or the elk, or with buffalo horns, and drew their daggers, which were not equal to the Roman sword. They were vanquished, but because

they were courageous they had to be twice conquered.

Now among them was a chief who was very rich. His name was Komm. He had a great store of torques, bracelets and rings in his coffers. Human heads he had also, embalmed in oil of cedar. They were the heads of hostile chiefs slain by himself or by his father or his father's father. Komm enjoyed the life of a man who is strong, free and powerful.

Followed by his weapons, his horses, his chariots and his Breton bulldogs, by the multitude of his fighting men and his women, he would wander without let or hindrance over his boundless dominions, through forest or along river-bank, until he came to a halt in one of those woodland shelters, one of those primitive farms of which he possessed a great number. There, at peace, surrounded by his faithful followers, he would fish, hunt the wild beasts, break in his horses and recall his adventures in war. And, as soon as the desire seized him, he would move on. He was a violent, crafty, subtle-minded man excelling in deed and in word. When the Atrebates shouted their war-cry, he forbore to don the helmet which was adorned with the horns of an ox. He remained quietly in one of his wooden houses full of gold, of warriors, of horses, of women, of wild pigs and smoked fish. After the defeat of his fellow-countrymen, he went and found Cæsar

and placed his brains and his influence at the service of the Romans. He was well received. Concluding rightly that this clever, powerful Gaul would be able to pacify the country and hold it in subjection to Rome, Cæsar bestowed upon him great powers and nominated him King of the Atrebates. Thus Komm, the chieftain, became Commius Rex. He wore the purple, and coined money whereon appeared his likeness in profile, his head encircled by a diadem with sharp points like those of the Greek and barbarian kings who wore their crowns as tokens of their friendship with Rome.

He was not execrated by the Atrebates. His sagacious and self-interested behaviour did not discredit him with a people devoid of Greek and Roman ideas of patriotism and citizenship. These savage, inglorious Gauls, ignorant of public life, esteemed cunning, yielded to force and marvelled at royal power, which seemed to them a magnificent innovation. The majority of these people, rough woodlanders or fishermen of the misty coast, had a still better reason for not blaming the conduct and the prosperity of their chieftain ; not knowing that they were Atrebates, nor even that Atrebates existed, the King of the Atrebates concerned them but little. Wherefore Komm was not unpopular. And if the favour of Rome meant danger to him, that danger did not come from his own people.

Now in the fourth year of the war, towards the end of summer, Cæsar armed a fleet for a descent upon Britain. Desiring to secure allies in the great Island, he resolved to send Komm as his ambassador to the Celts of the Thames, with the offer of an alliance with Rome. Sagacious, eloquent and by birth akin to the Britons—for certain tribes of the Atrebates had settled on both banks of the Thames—Komm was eminently fitted for this mission.

Komm was proud of his friendship with Cæsar. But he was in no hurry to discharge this mission, of the dangers of which he was fully aware. To induce him to undertake it Cæsar was compelled to grant him many favours. From the tribute paid by other Gallic towns he exempted Nemetacum, which was already growing into a city and a metropolis, so rapidly did the Romans develop the countries which they conquered. He somewhat relaxed the rigorous rule of the conquerors by restoring to it its rights and its own laws. Further, he gave Komm to rule over the Morini, who were the neighbours of the Atrebates on the sea-shore.

Komm set sail with Caius Volusenus Quadratus, prefect of cavalry, appointed by Cæsar to conduct a reconnaissance in Britain. But when the ship approached the sandy beach at the foot of the bird-haunted white cliffs, the Roman refused to disembark, fearing unknown danger and certain death.

Komm landed with his horses and his followers and spoke to the British chiefs who had come to meet him. He counselled them to prefer profitable friendship with the Romans to their pitiless wrath. But these chiefs, the descendants of Hu, the Powerful, and of his comrades in arms, were proud and violent. They listened impatiently to Komm's words. Anger clouded their woad-stained countenances, and they swore to defend their Island against the Romans.

"Let them land here," they cried, "and they will disappear like the snow on the sand of the seashore when the south wind blows upon it."

Holding Cæsar's counsel to be an insult, they were already drawing their daggers from their belts and preparing to put to death the herald of shame.

Standing bowed over his shield in the attitude of a suppliant, Komm invoked the name of brother by which he was entitled to call them. They were sons of the same fathers.

Wherefore the Britons forbore to slay him. They conducted him in chains to a great village near the coast. Passing down a road bordered by huts of wattle-work, he noticed high flat stones, fixed in the ground at irregular intervals, and covered with signs which he thought to be sacred, for it was not easy to decipher their meaning. He perceived that the huts of this great village, though poorer, were not

unlike those of the villages of the Atrebates. In front of the chiefs' dwellings poles were erected from which hung the antlers of deer, the skulls of boars and the fair-haired heads of men. Komm was taken into a hut which contained nothing save a hearthstone still covered with ashes, a bed of dried leaves and the image of a god shapen from the trunk of a lime-tree. Bound to the pillar which supported the thatched roof, the Atrebate meditated on his ill luck and sought in his mind for some magic word of power or some ingenious device which should deliver him from the wrath of the British chieftains.

And to beguile his wretchedness, after the manner of his ancestors, he composed a song of menace and complaint, coloured by pictures of his native woods and mountains, the memory of which filled his heart.

Women with babes at the breast came and looked at him curiously and questioned him as to his country, his race and his adventures. He answered them kindly. But his soul was sad and racked by cruel anxiety.

2

Detained until the end of summer on the Morini shore, Cæsar set sail one night about the third watch, and by the fourth hour of day had sight of the Island. The Britons awaited him on the beach.

But neither their arrows of hard wood nor their scythed chariots, nor their long-haired horses trained to swim in the sea among the shoals, nor their countenances made terrible with paint gave check to the Romans. The Eagle surrounded by legionaries touched the soil of the barbarians' Island. The Britons fled beneath a shower of stone and lead hurled from machines which they believed to be monsters. Struck with terror, they ran like a herd of elks before the spear of the hunter.

When towards evening they had reached the great village near the coast, the chiefs sat down on stones ranged in a circle by the road-side and took counsel. All night they continued to deliberate; and when dawn began to gleam on the horizon, while the larks' song pierced the grey sky, they went into the hut where Komm of the Atrebates had been enchained for thirty days. They looked at him respectfully because of the Romans. They unbound him. They offered him a drink made of the fermented juice of wild cherries. They restored to him his weapons, his horses, his comrades, and, addressing him with flattering words, they entreated him to accompany them to the camp of the Romans and to ask pardon for them from Cæsar the Powerful.

"Thou shalt persuade him to be our friend," they said to him, "for thou art wise and thy words are nimble and penetrating as arrows. Among all

the ancestors whose memory is enshrined in our songs, there is not one who surpasses thee in sagacity."

Joyfully did Komm of the Atrebates hearken to these words. But he concealed his pleasure, and, curling his lips into a bitter smile, he said to the British chiefs, pointing to the fallen willow leaves that were driven in eddies by the wind :

"The thoughts of vain men are stirred like these leaves and ceaselessly carried in every direction. Yesterday they took me for a madman and said I had eaten of the herb of Erin that infuriates the grazing beasts. To-day they perceive in me the wisdom of their ancestors. Nevertheless, I am as good a counsellor one day as another, for my words depend neither upon the sun nor upon the moon, but upon my understanding. As the reward of your ill-doing, I ought to deliver you up to the wrath of Cæsar, who would cut off your hands and put out your eyes, so that begging bread and beer in the wealthy villages you would testify to his might and justice throughout the Island of Britain. Notwithstanding I will forget the wrong you have done me. I will remember that we are brethren, that the Britons and the Atrebates are the fruit of the same tree. I will act for the good of my brethren who drink the waters of the Thames. Cæsar's friendship, which I came to their Island to offer

them, I will restore to them now that they have lost it through their folly. Cæsar, who loves Komm, and has made him to be King over the Atrebates and the Morini who wear collars of shells, will love the British chiefs, painted with glowing colours, and will establish them in their wealth and power, because they are the friends of Komm, who drinketh the waters of the Somme."

And Komm of the Atrebates spake again and said :

"Learn from me that which Cæsar shall say unto you when you bend over your shields at the foot of his tribunal and that which it behoveth you in your wisdom to reply unto him. He will say to you : 'I grant you peace. Deliver up to me noble children as hostages.' And you will make answer : 'We will deliver up unto you our noble children. And we will bring you certain of them this very day. But the greater number of our noble children are in the distant places of this Island, and to bring them hither will take many days.' "

The chiefs marvelled at the subtle mind of the Atrebate. One of them said to him :

"Komm, thou art possessed of a great understanding, and I believe thy heart to be filled with kindness toward thy British brethren who drink the waters of the Thames. If Cæsar were a man, we should have courage to fight against him, but we know him to be a god because his vessels and his

engines of war are living creatures and endowed with understanding. Let us go and ask him to pardon us for having fought against him and to leave us in possession of our sovereignty and of our riches."

Having thus spoken, the chiefs of the Island of Fogs leapt upon their horses, and set forth towards the sea-shore where the Romans were encamped near the cove, where their deep-keeled ships lay at anchor, not far from the beach up which they had drawn their galleys. Komm rode beside them. When they beheld the Roman camp, which was surrounded by ditches and palisades, traversed by wide and regular thoroughfares and covered with tents over which soared the Roman eagles and floated the wreaths of the standards, they paused in amazement and inquired by what art the Romans had built in one day a town more beautiful and greater than any in the Isle of Mists.

"What is that?" cried one of them.

"It is Rome," replied the Atrebate. "The Romans bear Rome with them everywhere."

Introduced into the camp, they repaired to the foot of the tribunal, where the Proconsul sat surrounded by the fasces. His eyes were like the eagle's; and he looked pale in his purple.

Komm assumed a suppliant's attitude and entreated Cæsar to pardon the British chiefs.

"When they fought against you," he said,

“these chiefs did not act according to their own heart, the dictates of which are always noble. When they drove against you their chariots of war, they obeyed, they commanded not. They yielded to the will of the poor and humble tribesmen who assembled in great numbers against you ; for they lacked understanding and were incapable of comprehending your might. You know that in all things the poor are inferior to the rich. Deny not your friendship to these men, who possess great wealth and can pay tribute.”

Cæsar granted the pardon which the chiefs implored, and said unto them :

“Deliver up to me as hostages the sons of your princes.”

The most venerable of the chiefs replied :

“We will deliver up unto you our noble children. And some of them we will bring to you this very day. But the children of our nobles are most of them in the distant places of our Isle, and to bring them hither will take many days.”

Cæsar inclined his head as a sign of assent. Thus, by the Atrebate’s counsel, the chiefs surrendered but a few young boys and those not of the highest nobility.

Komm remained in the camp. At night, being unable to sleep, he climbed the cliff and looked out to sea. The surf was breaking on the rocks. The

wind from the Channel mingled its sinister moaning with the roaring of the waves. The wild moon, in its stately passage through the clouds, cast a fleeting light on to the water. The Atrebate, with the keen eye of the savage, piercing through the shadow and the mist, perceived ships, surprised by the tempest, toiling in the waves and the wind. Some, helpless and drifting, were being driven by the billows, the foam of which shone upon their sides like a pale gleam ; others were putting out to sea. Their sails swept the waves like the wings of some fishing bird. These were the ships that were bringing Cæsar's cavalry, and they were being scattered by the storm. The Gaul, joyfully breathing the sea air, paced awhile along the edge of the cliff ; and soon he descried the little bay, where the Roman galleys which had alarmed the Britons lay dry upon the sand. He saw the tide approach them gradually, then reach them, raise them, hurl them one against the other and batter them, while the deep-keeled ships in the cove were tossed to and fro at anchor by a furious wind which carried away their masts and rigging like so many wisps of straw. Dimly he discerned the confused movements of the panic-stricken legionaries running along the beach. Their shouts reached his ear like the noise of a storm. Then he raised his eyes to the divine moon, worshipped by the Atrebates who dwell on river-banks

and in the deep forests. In the stormy British sky she hung like a shield. He knew that it was she, the copper moon at the full, that had brought this spring tide and caused the tempest, which was now destroying the Roman fleet. And on the cliff, in the majestic night, by the furious sea, there came to the Atrebate the revelation of a secret, mysterious force, more invincible than that of Rome.

When they heard of the disaster that had overtaken the fleet the Britons joyfully realized that Cæsar commanded neither the Ocean nor the moon, the friend of lonely shores and deep forests. They saw that the Roman galleys were not invincible dragons, since the tide had shattered them and cast them, with their sides rent open, on the sand of the beach. Filled once again with the hope of destroying the Romans, they thought of slaying a great number by the arrow and the sword, and of throwing those that were left into the sea. Wherefore every day they appeared more and more assiduous in Cæsar's camp. They brought the legionaries smoked meats and the skins of the elk. They assumed a kindly expression ; they spoke honeyed words, and admiringly they felt the muscular arms of the centurions.

In order to appear more submissive still, the chiefs surrendered their hostages ; but they were the sons of enemies on whom they wished to be revenged,

or uncomely children not born of families who were the issue of the gods. And, when they believed that the little dark men confidently relied upon their friendliness, they gathered together the warriors of all the villages on the banks of the Thames, and, uttering loud cries, they hurled themselves against the camp gates. These gates were defended by wooden towers. The Britons, unacquainted with the art of carrying fortified positions, could not penetrate through the outer circle, and many of the chiefs with woad-stained visages fell at the foot of the towers. Once again the Britons knew that the Romans were endowed with superhuman strength. Therefore on the morrow they came to implore Cæsar's pardon and to promise him their friendship.

Cæsar received them with a passive countenance, but that very night he caused his legions to embark in the hastily repaired ships and made for the Morini coast. Having lost hope of receiving the cavalry reinforcements which the tempest had scattered, he abandoned for the time the conquest of the Isle of Mists.

Komm of the Atrebates accompanied the army on its return to the Morini shore. He had embarked on the vessel which bore the Proconsul. Cæsar, curious concerning the customs of the barbarians, asked him whether the Gauls did not consider them-

selves the descendants of Pluto and whether it were not on that account that they reckoned time by nights instead of by days. The Atrebate could not give him the true reason for this custom. But he told Cæsar that in his opinion at the birth of the world night had preceded day.

"I believe," he added, "that the moon is more ancient than the sun. She is a very powerful divinity and the friend of the Gauls."

"The divinity of the moon," answered Cæsar, "is recognized by Romans and Greeks. But think not, Commius, that this planet, which shines upon Italy and upon the whole earth, is especially favourable to the Gauls."

"Take heed, Julius," replied the Atrebate, "and weigh your words. The moon that you here behold fleeing through the clouds is not the moon which at Rome shines on your marble temples. Though she be big and bright, this moon could not be seen in Italy. The distance is too great."

3

Winter came and covered Gaul with darkness, with ice and with snow. The hearts of the warriors in their wattle huts were moved as they thought on the chiefs and their retainers whom Cæsar had slain or sold by auction. Sometimes to the door of the hut came a man begging bread and showing his

wrists with the hands cut off by a lictor. And the warriors' hearts revolted. Words of wrath passed from mouth to mouth. They assembled by night in the depths of the woods and the hollows of the rocks.

Meanwhile King Komm with his faithful followers hunted in the forests, in the land of the Atrebates. Every day, a messenger in a striped mantle and red braces came by secret paths to the King, and, slackening the speed of his horse as he drew near to him, said in a low voice :

“ Komm, will you not be a free man in a free country? Komm, will you any longer submit to be a slave of the Romans? ”

Then the messenger disappeared along the narrow path, where the fallen leaves deadened the sound of his galloping horse.

Komm, King of the Atrebates, remained the Romans' friend. But gradually he persuaded himself that it behoved the Atrebates and the Morini to be free, since he was their King. It annoyed him to see Romans, settled at Nemetacum, sitting in tribunals, where they dispensed justice, and geometricians from Italy planning roads through the sacred forests. And then he admired the Romans less since he had seen their ships broken against the British cliffs and their legionaries weeping by night on the beach. He continued to

exercise sovereignty in Cæsar's name. But to his followers he darkly hinted at the approach of war.

Three years later the hour had struck : Roman blood had flowed in Genabum. The chieftains allied against Cæsar assembled their fighting men in the Arverni Hills. Komm did not love these chiefs. Rather did he hate them, some because they were richer than he in men, in horses and in lands ; others because of the profusion of the gold and the rubies which they possessed ; others, again, because they said that they were braver than he and of nobler race. Nevertheless, he received their messengers, to whom he gave an oak-leaf and a hazel twig as a sign of affection. And he corresponded with the chiefs who were hostile to Cæsar by means of twigs cut and knotted in such a manner as to be unintelligible save to the Gauls, who knew the language of leaves.

He uttered no war-cry. But he went to and fro among the villages of the Atrebates, and, visiting the warriors in their huts, to them he said :

“ Three things were the first to be born : man, liberty, light.”

He made sure that, whenever he should utter the war-cry, five thousand warriors of the Morini and four thousand warriors of the Atrebates would buckle on their baldrics of bronze at his call. And, encouraged by the thought that in the forest the

fire was smouldering beneath its ashes, he secretly passed over to the Treviri in order to win them for the Gallic cause.

Now, while he was riding with his followers beneath the willows on the banks of the Moselle, a messenger wearing a striped mantle brought him an ash bough bound to a spray of heather, in order to give him to understand that the Romans had suspected his designs and to enjoin him to be prudent. For such was the meaning of the heather tied to the ash. But he continued on his way and entered into the country of the Treviri. Titus Labienus, Cæsar's lieutenant, was encamped there with ten legions. Having been warned that King Commius was coming secretly to visit the chiefs of the Treviri, he suspected that his object was to seduce them from their allegiance to Rome. Having had him followed by spies, he received information which confirmed his suspicions. He then resolved to get rid of this man. He was a Roman, a son of the divine City, an example to the world, and by force of arms he had extended the Roman peace to the ends of the earth. He was a good general and an expert in mathematics and mechanics. During the leisure of peace, beneath the terebinths in the garden of his Campanian villa, he held converse with magistrates touching the laws, the morals and the customs of peoples. He praised the virtues of

antiquity and liberty. He read the works of Greek historians and philosophers. His was a rare and polished intellect. And because Komm was a barbarian, unacquainted with things Roman, it seemed to Titus Labienus good and fitting that he should have him assassinated.

Being informed of the place where he was, he sent to him his master of horse, Caius Volusenus Quadratus, who knew the Atrebate, for they had been commissioned to reconnoitre together the coasts of the isle of Britain before Cæsar's expedition hither; but Volusenus had not ventured to land. Therefore, by the command of Labienus, Cæsar's lieutenant, Volusenus chose a few centurions and took them with him to the village where he knew Komm to be. He could rely upon them. The centurion was a legionary promoted from the ranks, who as a sign of his office carried a vine-stock with which he used to strike his subordinates. His chiefs did what they liked with him. As an instrument of conquest he was only second to the road-maker. Volusenus said to his centurions:

"A man will approach me. You will suffer him to advance. I shall hold out my hand to him. At that moment you will strike him from behind, and you will kill him."

Having given these orders, Volusenus set forth with his escort. In a sunken way, near the village,

he met Komm with his followers. The King of the Atrebates, aware that he was suspected, would have turned his steed. But the master of the horse called him by name, assured him of his friendship and held out his hand to him.

Reassured by those signs of friendship, the Atrebate approached. As he was about to take the proffered hand, a centurion struck him on the head with his sword and caused him to fall bleeding from his horse. Then the King's followers threw themselves upon the little band of Romans, scattered them, took up Komm and carried him away to the nearest village, while Volusenus, who believed his task accomplished, crept back to the camp with his horsemen.

King Komm was not dead. He was carried secretly into the country of the Atrebates, where he was cured of his grievous wound. Having recovered, he took this oath :

“ I swear never to meet a Roman save to kill him.”

Soon he learnt that Cæsar had suffered a severe defeat at the foot of the Gergovian Mount and that forty-six centurions of his army had fallen beneath the walls of the town. Later he was told that the confederates commanded by Vercingetorix were besieged in the country of the Mandubii, at Alesia, a famous Gallic fortress founded by Hercules of Tyre. Then, with a following of warriors, Morini and

Atrebatas, he marched to the frontier of the Aedui, where an army was assembling to relieve the Gauls in Alesia. The army was numbered and was found to consist of two hundred and forty thousand foot and eight thousand horse. The command was entrusted to Viridomar and Eporodorus of the Aedui, Vergasillaun of the Averni and Komm of the Atrebatas.

After a long and arduous march, Komm, with his chiefs and fighting-men, reached the mountainous country of the Aedui. From the heights surrounding the plateau of Alesia he beheld the Roman camp and the earthworks dug all around it by those little dark men, who waged war with mattock and spade rather than with javelin and sword. This seemed to him to augur ill, for he knew that against trenches and machines the Gauls were of less avail than against human breasts. He himself, though well versed in the stratagems of war, understood little of the engineering art of the Romans. After three great battles, during which no break was made in the enemy's fortifications, the terrific rout of the Gauls carried off Komm as a blade of grass is whirled away in a storm. In the *mêlée* he had perceived Cæsar's red mantle and taken it for an omen of defeat. Now he fled furiously down the track, cursing the Romans, but pleased that the Gallic chieftains, of whom he was jealous, were suffering with him.

4

For a year Komm lived in hiding in the forests of the Atrebates. There he was safe, because the Gauls hated the Romans, and having themselves submitted to the conquerors they had a great respect for those who refused them obedience. On the river-bank and in the green-wood, accompanied by his followers, he led a life not differing greatly from that he had lived as the chief of many tribes. He gave himself up to hunting and fishing, devised stratagems and drank fermented drinks, which, though depriving him of the knowledge of human affairs, enabled him to understand those that are divine. But his soul had suffered a change, and it pained him to be no longer free. All the chiefs of his people had been killed in battle, or had died beneath the lash, or, bound by the lictor, had been led away to a Roman prison. No longer did a bitter envy of them possess him ; for now all his hatred was concentrated upon the Romans. He bound to his horse's tail the golden circlet which he, as the friend of the Senate and the Roman people, had received from the Dictator. To his dogs he gave the names of Cæsar, Caius and Julius. When he saw a pig he stoned it, calling it Volusenus. And he composed songs like those which he had heard in his youth, eloquently expressing the love of liberty.

Now, it happened that one day, absorbed in the chase, having wandered away from his followers, he climbed the high, heather-clad tableland which commands Nemetacum, and, gazing thence, he saw with amazement that the huts and stockades of his town had vanished, and that in a wall-encircled enclosure rose temples and houses of an architecture so prodigious as to inspire him with the horror and fear caused by works of magic. For he could not believe that in so short a time such dwellings could have been constructed by natural means.

He forgot the birds on the moorland, and, prone on the red earth, he lay and gazed long upon the strange town. Curiosity, stronger than fear, kept his eyes wide open. Until evening he observed the spectacle. Then there came to him an overpowering desire to enter the town. Beneath a stone on the heath he hid his golden torques, his bracelets, his jewelled belts and his weapons of chase. Retaining only his knife, hidden under his mantle, he descended the wooded hill-side. As he passed through the moist undergrowth, he gathered some mushrooms, so that he might appear as a poor man coming to sell his wares in the market. And in the third watch of the night he entered the town through the Golden Gate. It was kept by legionaries who allowed peasants bringing in food to pass. Thus was the King of the Atrebates, disguised as a

poor man, easily able to penetrate as far as the Julian way. This was bordered by villas and led to the Temple of Diana, the white façade of which was already adorned with interlacing arches of purple, azure and gold. In the grey morning light, Komm saw figures painted on the walls of the houses. They were ethereal pictures of dancing girls and scenes drawn from a history of which he was ignorant: a young virgin whom heroes were offering up as a sacrifice, a mother in her fury plunging a dagger into her two children as yet unweaned, a man with the hoofs of a goat raising his pointed ears in surprise, when, unrobing a sleeping and reclining virgin, he discovers her to be at once a youth and a woman. And there were in the courtyard other pictures representing modes of love unknown to the peoples of Gaul. Though passionately addicted to wine and women, he had no idea of Ausonian voluptuousness, because he had no clear idea of the variety of human forms and because he was untroubled by the desire for beauty. Having come to this town, which had once been his, in order to satisfy his hatred and inflame his wrath, he filled his heart with fury and loathing. He detested Roman art and the mysterious devices of the Roman painters. And in all these scenes figured on the city portals he saw but little, because his eyes lacked discernment save in observing the foliage of trees or the clouds in a dark sky.

Bearing his mushrooms in a fold of his mantle, he passed along the broad-paved streets. Beneath a door, over which was a phallus illuminated by a little lamp, he saw women wearing transparent tunics, who were watching for the passers-by. He approached with the intention of doing them violence. An old woman appeared, who in a squeaky voice said sharply :

“Go thy way. This is not a house for peasants who reek of cheese. Return to thy cows, herdsman.”

Komm replied that he had had fifty women, the most beautiful of the Atrebates, and possessed coffers full of gold. The courtesans began to laugh, and the old woman cried :

“Be off, drunkard !”

And it seemed to him that the duenna was a centurion armed with a vine-stock, with such splendour did the majesty of the Roman people shine throughout the Empire !

With one blow of his fist Komm broke her jaw, and serenely pursued his way, while the narrow passage of the house was filled with shrieks, howls and lamentations. On the left he passed the temple of Diana of the Ardeni and crossed the forum between two rows of porches. When he recognized the goddess Roma standing on her marble pedestal, wearing a helmet, with her arm outstretched to command the peoples, in order to insult her, he

performed before her the most ignoble of natural functions.

He was now coming to the end of the buildings of the town. Before him extended the stone circle of the amphitheatre as yet barely outlined, but already immense. He sighed :

“ O race of monsters ! ”

And he advanced among the shattered and trampled vestiges of Gallic huts, the thatched roofs of which once extended like some motionless army and which were now degraded into less even than ruins—into little more than a heap of manure spread upon the ground. And he reflected :

“ Behold what remains of so many ages of men ! Behold what they have made of the dwellings wherein the chiefs of the Atrebates hung up their arms ! ”

The sun had risen over the steps of the amphitheatre ; and with insatiable and inquisitive hatred the Gaul wandered among the vast enclosures filled with bricks and stones. His large blue eyes gazed on these stony monuments of conquest ; and he shook his long fair locks in the fresh breeze. Thinking himself alone, he muttered curses. But not far from the stone-masons' yard he perceived, at the foot of an oak-crowned hillock, a man seated on a mossy stone in a crouching position, with his mantle thrown over his head. He wore no insignia ; but

on his finger was the knight's ring, and the Atrebate knew enough of a Roman camp to recognize a military tribune. This soldier was writing on tablets of wax and appeared wrapt in thought. Having long remained motionless, he raised his head, pensive, with his style to his lips, looked about him vacantly, then gazed down again and resumed his writing. Komm saw his full face and perceived that he was young, and that he had a gentle, high-born air.

Then the Atrebate chief remembered his oath. He felt for his knife beneath his cloak, slipped behind the Roman with the agility of the savage and plunged the blade into the middle of his back. It was a Roman blade. The tribune uttered a deep groan and sank down. A trickle of blood flowed from one corner of his mouth. The waxen tablets remained on his tunic between his knees. Komm took them and looked eagerly at the signs traced thereon, thinking them to be magic signs the knowledge of which would give him great power. They were letters which he could not read and which were taken from the Greek alphabet then preferred to the Latin alphabet by the young *littérateurs* of Italy. Most of these letters were effaced by the flat end of the style; those which remained were Latin lines in Greek metre, and here and there they were intelligible:

TO PHŒBE, ON HER TOMTIT

O thou, whom Varius loved more than his eyes,
 Thy Varius, wandering beneath the rainy sky of Galata . . .
 And the couple sang in their golden cage of gold.

.

O my white Phœbe, with prudent hand give
 Millet and fresh water to thy frail captive.
 She sits, she is a mother : a mother is timid.

.

Oh ! come not to the misty Ocean's strand,
 Phœbe, for fear . . .
 . . . Thy white feet and thy limbs
 So nimbly moving to the castanet's rhythm.

.

And neither the gold of Cræsus nor the purple of Attala,
 But thy fresh arms, thy breasts. . . .

A faint sound ascended from the waking town.
 Past the remnants of the Gallic huts where a few
 barbarians, fierce though of humble rank, were still
 lurking in the trenches, the Atrebate fled, and
 through a breach in the wall leapt into the open
 country.

5

When, through the legionaries' sword, the lictor's
 lashes and Cæsar's flattering words Gaul was at
 length completely pacified, Marcus Antonius, the
 Quæstor, came to take up his winter quarters in

Nemetacum of the Atrebates. He was the son of Julia, Cæsar's sister. His functions were those of paymaster to the troops. He had also, in accordance with established rules, to apportion the booty captured. This booty was immense; for the conquerors had discovered bars of gold and carbuncles under the stones of sacred places, in the hollows of oaks and in the still water of pools; they had collected golden utensils from the huts of exterminated tribes and their chiefs.

Marcus Antonius brought with him many scribes and land surveyors, who set to work upon the apportionment of lands and movable goods, and would have drawn up many useless documents had not Cæsar prescribed for them simple and rapid methods of procedure. Merchants from Asia, workmen, lawyers and other settlers came in crowds to Nemetacum; and Atrebates, who had quitted their town, returned one by one, curious, astonished, and filled with wonder. The Gauls, for the most part, were now proud to wear the toga and to speak the tongue of the sublime sons of Remus. Having shaved off their long moustaches, they resembled Romans. Those who had succeeded in retaining any of their wealth employed a Roman architect to build them a house with an inner porch, rooms for the women and a fountain adorned with shell-work. They had paintings of Hercules, Mercury and the

Muses in their dining-room, and would sup reclining on couches.

Komm, though himself illustrious and the son of an illustrious father, had lost most of his followers. Nevertheless he continued a rebel, and led a wandering, warlike life in company with a few fighting-men, who were addicted to plunder and rape, or who, like their chief, were possessed of a keen desire for liberty or of hatred for the Romans. They followed him into impenetrable forests, into marshes and even into those moving islands which occur in the broad estuaries of rivers. They were entirely devoted to him, but they addressed him without reverence, as a man speaks to his equal, because they were really his equals in courage, and in the extremity of perpetual hardship, poverty and wretchedness. They dwelt in trees or in the clefts of rocks. They sought out caverns worn in the friable stone by water gushing down narrow valleys. When there were no beasts to hunt, they fed on blackberries and arbutus berries. They were excluded from towns by their fear of the Romans or by the vigilance of the Roman guards. In few villages were they readily received. Komm, however, always found a welcome in the huts scattered over the wind-swept sands which border the lazy waters of the Somme estuary. The dwellers on these dunes fed on fish. Poor, dishevelled, buried among the blue thistles

of their barren soil, they had had no experience of Roman might. They received Komm and his companions into their subterranean abodes, which were covered with reeds and stones rounded by the Ocean. They listened to him attentively, having never heard any man talk so well. He said to them :

“ Know who are the friends of the Atrebates and of the Morini, who live on the sea-shore and in the deep forest.

“ The moon, the forest and the sea are the friends of the Morini and the Atrebates. And neither the sea nor the forest, nor the moon loves the little dark men who follow Cæsar.

“ Now the sea said to me : ‘ Komm, I am hiding the ships of the Veneti in a lonely cove on my shore.’

“ The forest said to me : ‘ Komm, I will provide a secure shelter for thee, who art an illustrious chieftain, and for thy faithful companions.’

“ The moon said to me : ‘ Komm, thou hast seen me in the isle of the Britons shattering the Roman ships. I command the clouds and the winds, and I will refuse to shine upon the drivers of the chariots which bear victuals to the Romans of Nemetacum, in order that thou mayest take them by surprise in the darkness of the night.’

“ Thus spoke unto me the sea, the forest and the moon. And this I bid you.

“Leave your boats and your nets and come with me. You will all be chiefs in war and of great renown. We shall fight great and profitable battles. We shall win victuals, treasure and women in abundance. Behold in what manner :

“Such is my knowledge of the whole country of the Atrebates and the Morini that there is not a single river, or pool, or rock with the situation of which I am unacquainted. And likewise every road, every path with its exact length and its precise direction lies as clear in my mind as upon the soil of our ancestors. Great and royal indeed must be my mind thus to encompass the whole land of the Atrebates. But know that many another country is likewise contained in it—the lands of the Britons, the Gauls and the Germans. Wherefore, had it been given me to command the peoples, I should have conquered Cæsar and driven the Romans out of this country. Wherefore we, you and I who speak, shall surprise the couriers of Marcus Antonius and the convoys of food destined for the town, which has been reft from me. We shall surprise them without difficulty, for I know along which roads they travel, and their soldiers will not discover us, since they know not the roads we shall take. And were they to follow on our tracks, we should escape from them in the ships of the Veneti, which would bear us to the isle of the Britons.”

With such words, on the misty sea-shore, did Komm inspire his hosts with confidence. And he finally won them over by giving them pieces of gold and iron, the last vestiges of the treasure which had once been his. They said to him :

“ We will follow thee wherever it please thee to lead us.”

He led them by unknown ways to the edge of the Roman road. When he saw horses grazing on the lush grass near the abode of a rich man, he gave them to his companions.

Thus he gathered together a body of horsemen, which was joined by those of the Atrebates who desired to wage war for the sake of booty, and by some deserters from the Roman camp. The latter Komm did not receive, in order not to break the oath which he had sworn never again to look a Roman in the face save to slay him. But he had them questioned by some one of intelligence, and dismissed them with food for three days. Sometimes all the male inhabitants of a village, young and old, entreated him to receive them as his followers. These men had been completely despoiled by the tax-gatherers of Marcus Antonius, who, in addition to the imposts which Cæsar levied, had demanded others, which were not due, and had fined chiefs for imaginary offences. In short, these publicans, after filling the coffers of the State, took care to enrich

themselves at the expense of barbarians whom they thought a stupid people, and whose importunate complaints could always be silenced by the executioner's axe. Komm chose the strongest of these men. The others were dismissed, despite their tears and their entreaties not to be left to die of hunger or at the hands of the Romans. He did not wish for a great army, because he did not wish to wage a great war as Vercingetorix had done.

In a few days he had, with his little band, captured several convoys of flour and cattle, massacred isolated legionaries up to the very walls of Nemeta-cum and terrified the Roman population of the town.

"These Gauls," said the tribunes and centurions, "are cruel barbarians, mockers of the gods, enemies of the human race. Scorning their plighted word, they offend the majesty of Rome and of Peace. They deserve to be made an example. We owe it to humanity to chastise these criminals."

The complaints of the settlers and the cries of the soldiers penetrated into the Quæstor's tribunal. At first Marcus Antonius paid no heed to them. In well-heated, well-closed halls he was occupied with actors and courtesans, who were representing on the stage the works of that Hercules whom he resembled in feature, in the cut of his short curly beard, and in the vigour of his limbs. Clothed in a lion's skin, club in hand, Julia's robust son threw fictitious

monsters to the ground and with his arrow pierced a false hydra. Then, suddenly exchanging the lion's pelt for Omphale's robe, he likewise changed his passion.

Meanwhile convoys were being intercepted, bands of soldiers surprised, harried and put to flight, and one morning the centurion, G. Fusius, was found hanging disembowelled from a tree near the Golden Gate.

In the Roman camp it was known that the author of these deeds of violence was Commius, formerly king by the grace of Rome, now a robber chieftain. Marcus Antonius commanded energetic action to be taken in order to assure the safety of soldiers and settlers. And, foreseeing that the crafty Gaul would not easily be captured, he bade the Prætor to make straightway some terrible example. In order to carry out his chief's design, the Prætor caused the two richest Atrebates in the city of Nemetacum to be brought before his tribunal.

One was Vergal by name, the other Ambrow. Both were of illustrious birth, and they had been the first of their tribe to make friends with Cæsar. Poorly rewarded for their prompt submission, robbed of all their honours and of a great part of their wealth, ceaselessly annoyed by coarse centurions and covetous lawyers, they had ventured to whisper a few complaints. Imitating the Romans

and wearing the toga, they lived in Nemetacum, vain and simple-minded, proud and humiliated. The Prætor examined them, condemned them to suffer the traitors' death and on that very day handed them over to the lictors. They died doubting the justice of Rome.

Thus did the Quæstor by his firmness banish fear from the hearts of the settlers, who presented him with a laudatory address. The municipal councillors of Nemetacum, blessing his paternal vigilance and his piety, decreed that a bronze statue should be raised in his honour. After this several Roman merchants, having ventured out of the town, were surprised and slain by Komm's horsemen.

6

The prefect of the body of cavalry stationed at Nemetacum of the Atrebates was Caius Volusenus Quadratus, the same who had formerly enticed King Commius into a trap and had said to the centurions of his escort : " When I hold out my hand as a sign of friendship you will strike from behind." Caius Volusenus Quadratus was held in high esteem in the army because of his obedience to the call of duty and his unflinching courage. He had received rich rewards and enjoyed the honours due to military virtue. Marcus Antonius appointed him to hunt down Commius.

Volusenus zealously carried out the mission confided to him. He planned ambushes for Komm, and, keeping in constant touch with his robber bands, harassed them incessantly. Meanwhile the Atrebate, a cunning master of guerilla warfare by swift manœuvring, wore out the Roman cavalry and surprised isolated soldiers. He slew his prisoners as a matter of religious sentiment, trusting thus to propitiate the gods. But the gods hide their thoughts as well as their countenances. And it was after one of these pious performances that Komm fell into the greatest danger. Wandering in the land of the Morini, he had just slain by night on a stone in the forest two young and handsome prisoners, when on issuing from the wood he and all his men were surprised by the cavalry of Volusenus, which, being better armed and better skilled in manœuvring, surrounded him and killed many of his warriors and their horses. He succeeded, however, in making his escape, accompanied by the bravest and the cleverest of the Atrebates. They fled; they galloped at full speed over the plain, towards the beach where the misty Ocean rolls its pebbles over the sand. And, looking round, they saw the Roman helmets gleaming far behind them.

Komm had a fair hope of escaping. His horses were swifter and less heavily laden than the enemy's. He reckoned on reaching in time the boats awaiting

him in a neighbouring cove, and with his faithful followers making for the land of the Britons.

Thus thought the chief, and the Atrebates rode in silence. Now a drop in the ground on a clump of dwarf-trees would hide the horsemen of Volusenus. Then on the immense grey plain the two companies would again come in sight of one another, but separated by an increasingly wide interval. The pale bronze helmets were outdistanced and Komm could distinguish naught to the rear save a cloud of dust moving on the horizon. Already the Gauls were breathing with delight the salt sea air. But as they drew nigh the shore the dusty incline caused the pace of the Gallic horses to slacken, and Volusenus began to gain on them.

Faint, almost imperceptible, the sound of Roman voices was caught by the keen ears of the barbarians, when, beyond the wind-bent larches, they first descried from the summit of a dune the masts of ships that lay gathered in the bend of the lonely shore. They uttered one long cry of joy. And Komm congratulated himself on his sagacity and good luck. But, having begun their descent to the beach, they paused half-way down, seized with fear and horror, as they perceived the fine boats of the Veneti, broad keeled, lofty of stem and stern, now high and dry on the sand, there to remain for many a long hour, while far away in the distance gleamed

the waves of the low tide. At this sight they sat inert, stricken dumb, stooping over their steaming horses, which, with muscles relaxed, bowed their heads to the land breeze that blinded them as it blew their long manes into their eyes.

In the confusion and the silence resounded the voice of the chief crying :

“ To the ships, horsemen ! The wind is good !
To the ships ! ”

They obeyed without understanding. And, pushing on to the ships, Komm bade them unfurl the sails. They were the skins of beasts dyed bright colours. No sooner were they unfurled than the rising wind filled the sails.

The Gauls wondered what could be the object of this manœuvre and whether the chief hoped to see the stout oaken keels ploughing through the sand of the beach as if it were the water of the Ocean. Some thought there might yet be time for flight, others of meeting death while slaying the Romans.

Meanwhile Volusenus, at the head of his horsemen, was climbing the hill which borders on the pebbled, sandy shore. Rising from the bottom of the cove he saw the masts of the ships of the Veneti. Perceiving the sails unfurled and filled with a favourable wind, he bade his troops halt, called down obscene curses on the head of Commius, groaned over his horses, which had perished in vain, and,

turning bridle, commanded his men to go back to camp.

"What is the good," he thought, "of pursuing the bandits any farther? Commius has embarked. He has set sail, and, borne by such a wind, he is already far beyond the reach of the javelin."

Soon afterwards Komm and the Atrebates reached the thickets and the moving islands, which they filled with the sound of their heroic laughter.

Six months later Komm again took the field. One day Volusenus surprised him, with a score of horsemen, on open ground. With the prefect was about an equal number of men and horses. He gave the order to attack. The Atrebate, whether he feared his inability to meet the charge, or whether he planned some stratagem, signed to his followers to flee, and himself wildly dashed across the immense plain in a long, galloping flight, hard pressed by Volusenus. Then, suddenly, he turned, and, followed by his Gauls, threw himself furiously on the Prefect of the Horse and, with one thrust of his lance, pierced his thigh. At the sight of their general struck down the Romans fled in amazement. Then the discipline of their military training asserted itself, enabling them to overcome the natural instinct of fear; they returned to pick up Volusenus just as Komm, full of a fierce delight, was pouring upon him the most ferocious insults.

The Gauls could not withstand the little Roman band, which, forming a compact mass, charged them vigorously and slew or captured the greater number. Commius almost alone escaped, thanks to his horse's speed.

Volusenus, on the point of death, was carried back to the Roman camp. But, thanks to the leech's art or the strength of his own constitution, he recovered from his wound. Commius had lost everything in this fray, his faithful warriors and his hatred. Replete with vengeance, henceforth tranquil and content, he sent a messenger to Marcus Antonius. This messenger, having been admitted to the Quæstor's tribunal, spoke thus :

" Marcus Antonius, King Commius promises to appear in any place which shall be indicated to him, to do all that thou shalt command and to give hostages. One thing only he asks—that he shall be spared the disgrace of ever appearing before a Roman."

Marcus Antonius was magnanimous.

" I understand," said he, " that Commius may be somewhat disgusted by his interviews with our generals. I excuse him from ever appearing before any of us. I grant him his pardon ; and I receive his hostages."

What happened afterwards to Komm of the Atrebates is unknown ; the rest of his life cannot be traced.

FARINATA DEGLI UBERTI;
OR,
CIVIL WAR

Ed ei s'ergea col petto e con la fronte,
Come avesse lo inferno in gran dispetto.

Inferno, Can. 10.



AS he sat on the terrace of his tower, the aged Farinata degli Uberti fixed his keen gaze on the battlemented town. Standing at his side, Fra Ambrogio looked at the sky that was blushing with the rosy hues of evening and crowning with its fiery blossoms the garland of hills which encircles Florence. From the neighbouring banks of the Arno the perfume of myrtles was wafted upwards into the still air. The birds' last cries had re-echoed from the bright roof of San-Giovanni. Suddenly there came the sound of two horses passing over the sharp pebbles from the river-bed which paved the road, and two young riders, handsome as two St. Georges, emerging from the narrow street, rode past the windowless palace of the Uberti. When they were at the foot of the

Ghibelline tower one spat as a sign of contempt ; the other, raising his arm, put his thumb between his fore and his middle finger. Then both, spurring their horses, reached the wooden bridge at a gallop. Farinata, a witness of this insult offered to his name, remained tranquil and silent. His shrivelled cheeks trembled and briny tears moistened his yellow eyeballs. Finally, he shook his head three times and said :

“ Why does this people hate me ? ”

Fra Ambrogio did not reply. And Farinata continued to gaze down upon the city, which he could no longer see save through the bitter mist that veiled his eyes. Then, turning towards the monk his thin face with its eagle nose and threatening jaws, he asked again :

“ Why does this people hate me ? ”

The monk made a gesture as if he would drive away a fly.

“ What matters to you, Messer Farinata, the obscene insolence of two striplings bred in the Guelf towers of Oltarno ? ”

FARINATA.

Nothing to me, indeed, are those two Frescobaldi, minions of the Romans, sons of pimps and prostitutes. I fear not the scorn of such as they. Neither for my friends nor, especially, for my

enemies is it possible to despise me. My sorrow is to feel weighing upon me the hatred of the people of Florence.

FRA AMBROGIO.

Hatred has prevailed in cities since the sons of Cain introduced pride with the arts, and since the two Theban horsemen satisfied their fraternal hatred by shedding each other's blood. Insult breeds wrath, and wrath insult. With unfailing fecundity hatred engenders hatred.

FARINATA.

But how can love engender hatred? And wherefore am I odious to my well-beloved city?

FRA AMBROGIO.

Since you wish it, Messer Farinata, I will give you an answer. But from my lips you will have naught but truthful words. Your fellow-citizens cannot forgive you for having fought at Montaperto, beneath Manfred's white banner, on the day when the Arbia was stained with Florentine blood. And they hold that on that day, in that fatal valley, you were not the friend of your city.

FARINATA.

What! I have not loved her! To live her life, to live for her alone, to suffer fatigue, hunger,

thirst, fever, sleeplessness, and that most terrible of woes, exile ; to brave death at every hour, to risk falling alive into the hands of those whom my death alone would not suffice to content ; to dare everything, to endure everything for her sake, for her good, to rescue her from the power of my enemies, who were hers, to induce her, whether she would or not, to follow wholesome advice, to espouse the right cause, to think as I thought myself, with the noblest and the best, to wish her entirely beautiful and subtle and generous, to sacrifice for this object alone my possessions, my sons, my neighbours, my friends ; in her interest alone to render myself liberal, avaricious, faithful, perfidious, magnanimous, criminal, this was not to love my city ! Who loved her, then, if I did not ?

FRA AMBROGIO.

Alas, Messer Farinata, your pitiless love caused violence and craft to take arms against the city and cost the lives of ten thousand Florentines !

FARINATA.

Yes, my affection for my city was as strong as that, Fra Ambrogio. And the deeds it inspired me to perform are worthy to serve as examples to our sons and our sons' sons. That the memory of them might not perish I would write of them myself, if

I had a head for writing. When I was young, I composed love-songs, which ladies marvelled at and the clerks put into their books. With that exception, I have always scorned letters as much as the arts, and I have no more troubled to write than to weave wool. Let every man follow my example and act according to his rank in life. But you, Fra Ambrogio, who are a very learned scribe, it is for you to relate the bold expeditions I have led. Great honour would it bring you, if you told them not as a monk, but as a noble, for the exploits are knightly and valorous. Such a story would show how active I have been. And of all that I have done I regret nothing.

I was exiled, the Guelfs had slain three of my kinsfolk. Sienna received me ; of this my enemies made such a grievance that they incited the Florentines to march in arms against the hospitable city. For the exiles, for Sienna, I asked the aid of Cæsar's son, the King of Sicily.

FRA AMBROGIO.

It is only too true : you were the ally of Manfred, the friend of the Sultan of Luceria, of the astrologer, the renegade, the excommunicate.

FARINATA.

Then we swallowed the Pontiff's excommunications like water. I know not whether Manfred had

learned to read destiny in the stars, but true it is that he made much of his Saracen horsemen. He was as prudent as he was brave, a sagacious prince, careful of the blood of his men and of the gold in his coffers. He replied to the Siennese that he would grant them succour. He made great promises in order to inspire great gratitude. He gave them but meagre fulfilment through craft and fear of diminishing his own power. He sent his banner with one hundred German horsemen. Disappointed and incensed, the Siennese spoke of rejecting this contemptible aid. I gave them better counsel and taught them the art of passing a cloth through a ring. One day, having gorged the Germans with wine and meat, I induced them to make a sortie at so unlucky a moment that they fell into an ambuscade and were all slain by the Guelfs of Florence, who took Manfred's white banner and trailed it in the dust at the end of an ass's tail. Straightway I informed the Sicilian of the insult. He felt it, as I had foreseen, and, to execute vengeance, he sent eight hundred horsemen, with a goodly number of infantry, under the command of Count Giordano, who was reputed to be the equal of Hector of Troy. Meanwhile Sienna and her allies assembled their militia. Before long our strength was thirteen thousand fighting men. We were fewer than were the Guelfs of Florence. But among them were

false Guelfs who merely awaited the hour to declare themselves Ghibellines, while among our Ghibellines there were no Guelfs. Thus having on my side, not all the advantage (one never has all), but advantages which were great and un hoped for, I was impatient to engage in battle, which, if won, would destroy my enemies, and, if lost, would only crush my allies. I hungered and thirsted after this battle. To make the Florentine army engage in it I used every means of which I could conceive. I sent to Florence two minor friars charged secretly to inform the Council that, seized with repentance and desiring to buy my fellow-citizens' pardon by rendering some signal service, I was ready, for ten thousand florins, to deliver up into their hands one of the gates of Sienna ; but that for the success of the enterprise it would be necessary for the Florentine army, in as great strength as was possible, to advance to the banks of the Arbia, under the pretence of coming to the aid of the Guelfs of Montalcino. When my two friars had departed, my mouth spat out the pardon it had asked, and, perturbed by a terrible anxiety, I waited. I feared lest the nobles of the Council should realize the folly of sending an army to the Arbia. But I hoped that the project, by its very extravagance, would please the plebeians and that they would adopt it all the more eagerly because of the opposition of the nobles,

whom they mistrusted. And so it happened : the nobility discerned the snare, but the artisans fell into it. They were in the majority on the Council. At their command the Florentine army set forth and carried out the plan which I had formed for its destruction. How beautiful was that dawn, when, riding into a little band of exiles, I saw the sun pierce the white morning mist and shine on the forest of Guelf lances which covered the slopes of La Malena ! I had put my hand on my enemies. But a little more artfulness and I was sure of destroying them. By my advice, Count Giordano caused the infantry of the commune of Sienna to defile three times before their eyes, changing their helmets after their first and second appearances, in order that they might seem more numerous than they actually were ; and thus he showed them to the Guelfs, first red, as an omen of blood ; then green, as an omen of death ; then half-black, half-white, as an omen of captivity. True omens ! O what delight ! when, charging the Florentine horse, I beheld it waver and wheel in circles like a flight of crows, when I saw the man in my pay, him whose name I may not utter for fear of defiling my lips, strike down with one blow of his sword the standard which he had come to defend, and all the horsemen, looking vainly henceforth for their rallying point, the white and blue colours, flee panic-stricken, trampling

one another down, while we in their pursuit slaughtered them like pigs brought to market. Only the artisans of the commune stood their ground. Them we had to slay round the bleeding quarry. Finally, there remained before us naught save corpses and cowards who joined hands to come to us and on their knees to beg for mercy. And I, content with my work, stood apart.

FRA AMBROGIO.

Alas, accursed valley of the Arbia ! It is said that after so many years it still smells of death, that by night, deserted, haunted by wild beasts, it resounds with the howls of the white witches. Was your heart so hard, Messer Farinata, that it did not dissolve in tears when, on that evil day, you saw the flower-clad slopes of La Malena drinking Florentine blood ?

FARINATA.

My only grief was to think that thus I had shown my enemies the way to victory and that, by humbling them after ten years of pride and power, I had suggested to them what they themselves might do in turn after the lapse of as many years. I reflected that, since with my aid Fortune's wheel had taken this turn, the wheel might take another turn and humble me and mine in the dust. This presentiment cast a shadow over the dazzling light of my joy.

FRA AMBROGIO.

It seemed to me that you detested, and rightly, the treachery of that man who trailed in dirt and blood the standard beneath which he had set out to fight. I myself, who know that the mercy of the Lord is infinite, I, even, doubt whether Bocca will not take his place in hell with Cain, Judas and Brutus, the parricide. But if Bocca's crime is so execrable, do you not repent having caused it? And think you not, Messer Farinata, that you yourself, by drawing the Florentine army into a snare, offended the just God and did that which is not lawful?

FARINATA.

Everything is lawful to him who obeys the dictates of a vigorous mind and a strong heart. When I deceived my enemies I was magnanimous, not treacherous. And if you make it a crime to have employed, in order to save my party, the man who tore down his party's standard, then you are wrong, Fra Ambrogio, for nature, not I, had made him a traitor, and it was I, not nature, who turned his treachery to good use.

FRA AMBROGIO.

But since you loved your city even when fighting against her, it must have been painful to you that

you were able to overcome her only with the aid of the Siennese, her enemies. Were you not somewhat ashamed at this?

FARINATA.

Wherefore should I have been ashamed? Could I have re-established my party in the city in any other way? I made alliance with Manfred and the Siennese. Had it been necessary, I would have sought the alliance of those African giants who have but one eye in the middle of their foreheads and who feed upon human flesh, according to the report of Venetian navigators who have seen them. The pursuit of such an interest is no mere game played according to rule, like chess or draughts. If I had judged one thing lawful and another unlawful, think you that my adversaries would have been bound by such rules? No, indeed, we on Arbia's banks were not playing a game of dice under the trellis, tablets on knee and little white pebbles to mark the score. It was conquest that we were working for. And each side knew it.

Nevertheless, I grant you, Fra Ambrogio, that it would have been better to settle our quarrel between Florentines alone. Civil war is so grand, so noble, so fine a thing, that it should, if possible, be waged without alien intervention. Those who engage in it should be fellow-citizens and preferably nobles,

who would bring to it an unwearying arm and keen intelligence.

I would not say the same of foreign wars. They are useful, even necessary enterprises, undertaken to maintain or extend the boundaries of State or to promote traffic in merchandise. Generally speaking, neither profit nor honour results from waging these great wars unaided. A wise people will employ mercenaries, and delegate the enterprise to experienced captains who know how to win much with few men. Nothing but professional courage is needed, and it is better to spill gold than blood. One cannot put one's heart into it. For it would hardly be wise to hate a foreigner because his interests are opposed to ours, while it is natural and reasonable to hate a fellow-citizen who opposes what one esteems useful and good. In civil war alone can one display a discerning mind, an inflexible soul and the fortitude of a heart filled with anger or with love.

FRA AMBROGIO.

I am the poorest servant of the poor. But I have one master alone; he is the King of Heaven. I should be false to Him were I not to say, Messer Farinata, that the only warrior worthy of the highest praise is he who marches beneath the cross, singing:

Vexilla regis prodeunt.

The blessed Dominic, whose soul, like a sun, rose on the darkened Church in a night of falsehood, taught us, concerning war against heretics, that the more fiercely and bitterly it is fought the more does it display charity and mercy. And he must have known, he who, bearing the name of the Prince of the Apostles, struck the Goliath of heresy on the forehead like the stone from David's sling. Between Como and Milan he suffered martyrdom. From him my order derives great honour. Whosoever draws sword against such a soldier is another Antiochus, in the eyes of our Lord Jesus Christ. But, having instituted empires, kingdoms and republics, God suffers them to be defended by arms, and He looks down upon the captains who, having called upon Him, draw sword for the deliverance of their country. But He turns away His countenance from the citizen who strikes His city and sheds its blood, as you were so ready to do, Messer Farinata, undeterred by the fear that Florence, exhausted and rent by you, might have no strength to withstand her enemies. In the ancient chronicles it is written that cities weakened by internecine warfare offer an easy prey to the foreigner who lies in wait to destroy them.

FARINATA.

Monk, is it best to attack the lion when he watches or when he sleeps? Now, I have kept awake

the lion of Florence. Ask the citizens of Pisa if they had reason to rejoice at having attacked him at a time when I had made him furious. Search in the ancient histories and you will find there also, perhaps, that cities which are seething within are ready to scald the enemy who lurks without, but that a people made lukewarm by peace at home has no desire for war abroad. Know that it is dangerous to offend a city vigilant and noble enough to maintain internal warfare, and say not again that I have weakened my city.

FRA AMBROGIO.

Nevertheless, you know that she was like to perish after the fatal day of the Arbia. The panic-stricken Guelfs had sallied forth from her gates and had taken the sad road to exile. The Ghibelline Diet, convoked at Empoli by Count Giordano, decided to destroy Florence.

FARINATA.

It is true. All wished that not one stone should be left upon another. All said, "Let us crush this nest of Guelfs." I alone rose to defend her. I alone shielded her from harm. To me the Florentines owe the very breath of life. Those who insult me and spit upon my threshold, had they any piety in

their hearts, would honour me as a father. I saved my city.

FRA AMBROGIO.

After you had ruined it. Nevertheless, may that day at Empoli be counted to you for righteousness in this world and the next, Messer Farinata ! And may St. John the Baptist, the patron saint of Florence, bear to the ear of our Lord the words which you uttered in the assembly of the Ghibelines ! Repeat to me, I pray you, those praiseworthy words. They are diversely reported, and I would know them exactly. Is it true, as many say, that you took as your text two Tuscan proverbs—one of the ass, the other of the goat ?

FARINATA.

That of the goat I hardly remember, but I have a clearer recollection of the proverb of the ass. It may be, as some have said, that I confused the two proverbs. That matters not. I rose and spoke somewhat thus :

“ The ass bites at the roots as hard as he can. And you, following his example, will bite without discrimination, to-morrow as yesterday, not discerning that which should be destroyed and that which should be respected. But know that I have suffered so much and fought so long only in order to dwell

in my city. I shall therefore defend her and die, if need be, sword in hand."

I said not another word and I went out. They ran after me, and, endeavouring to appease me by their entreaties, they swore to respect Florence.

FRA AMBROGIO.

May our sons forget that you were at the Arbia and remember that you were at Empoli ! You lived in cruel days, and I do not think it easy either for a Guelf or a Ghibelline to see salvation. May God, Messer Farinata, save you from hell and receive you after your death into His blessed Paradise.

FARINATA.

Paradise and hell are but the creations of our own mind. Epicurus taught this, and many since his day have known it to be true. You yourself, Fra Ambrogio, have you not read in your book : " For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts ; as the one dieth so dieth the other." But if, like ordinary souls, I believed in God, I would pray to him to leave the whole of me here after death, that soul and body alike might be buried in my tomb beneath the walls of my beautiful San Giovanni. All around are coffins hewn out of stone by the Romans to receive their dead. Now they are open and empty. In one of those beds I would

wish to rest and sleep at last. In life I suffered the bitterness of exile, and yet I was but a day's journey from Florence. Farther away I should have been more wretched still. I desire to remain for ever in my beloved city. May my descendants remain there also.

FRA AMBROGIO.

It fills me with horror to hear you blaspheme the God who created heaven and earth, the mountains of Florence and the roses of Fiesole. And that which most terrifies me, Messer Farinata degli Uberti, is that you contrive to invest evil with a certain nobility. If, contrary to the hope which I still cherish, infinite mercy were not to be vouchsafed to you, I believe you would be a credit to hell.

THE KING DRINKS



IN the city of Troyes, in the year of grace, 1428, Canon Guillaume Chappedelaine was elected by the Chapter to be King of the Epiphany, in accordance with the custom which then prevailed throughout Christian France. For the canons were wont to choose one of their number and to designate him as king because he was to take the place of the King of kings and to gather them all round his table, until such time as Jesus Christ Himself should gather them, as they all hoped, into His holy Paradise.

Sieur Guillaume Chappedelaine owed his election to his virtuous life and generosity. He was a rich man. Both the Burgundian and the Armagnac captains, when ravaging Champagne, had spared his vineyards. For this good fortune he was indebted first to God and then to himself, to the kindness he had shown to the two factions which were at that time rending asunder the kingdom of the lilies. His wealth had contributed not a little to his election ;

for in that year a setten* of corn fetched eight francs, five-and-twenty eggs six sous, a young pig seven francs, while throughout the winter Churchmen had been reduced to eat cabbages like villeins.

Wherefore on the Feast of the Epiphany, Sieur Guillaume Chappedelaine, clothed in his dalmatica, holding in his hand a palm-branch in lieu of a sceptre, took his place in the cathedral choir, beneath a canopy of cloth of gold. Meanwhile, there came forth out of the sacristy, three canons, wearing crowns upon their heads. One was robed in white, another in red, the third in black. They stood for the three kings of the East, the Magi; and, going down to that part of the church which represents the foot of the cross, they chanted the Gospel of St. Matthew. A deacon, bearing five lighted candles, at the end of a pole to symbolize the miraculous star which led the Magi to Bethlehem, ascended the great nave and entered the choir. The three canons followed him singing, and, when they reached this passage in the gospel, *Et intrantes domum, invenerunt puerum cum Maria, matre ejus, et procidentes adoraverunt eum*, they stopped in front of Sieur Guillaume Chappedelaine and bowed low before him. Then came three children, bearing salt and spices, which

* An obsolete measure varying according to place. In 1703, in the Orkney and Shetland Isles a setten of barley was about twenty-eight pounds' weight.—*Trans*,

Sieur Guillaume graciously received after the manner of the Infant King who had accepted the myrrh, the gold and the frankincense of the kings of this world. After this, divine service was celebrated with due devoutness.

In the evening the canons were invited to sup with the King of the Epiphany. Sieur Guillaume's house was close against the apse of the cathedral. It was recognizable by the golden hood on a shield of stone which adorned its low door. That night the great hall was strewn with foliage and lit by twelve torches of fir-wood. The whole Chapter sat down to the tables, groaning beneath a lamb cooked whole. There were present Sieurs Jean Bruant, Thomas Alépée, Simon Thibouville, Jean Coquemard, Denys Petit, Pierre Corneille, Barnabé Videloup and François Pigouchel, canons of Saint-Pierre, Sieur Thibault de Saulges, knight and hereditary lay canon, and, at the bottom of the table, Pierrolet, the little clerk, who, although he could not write, was Sieur Guillaume's secretary and served him at Mass. He looked like a girl dressed up as a boy. He it was who on Candlemas Day appeared as an angel. It was also the custom on Ember Wednesday in December, when the coming of the Angel Gabriel to announce to Mary the mystery of the Incarnation was read at Mass, for a young girl to be placed on a platform and for a child with wings to tell her that

she was about to become the mother of the Son of God. A stuffed dove was suspended over the girl's head. For two years Pierrolet had represented the angel of the Annunciation.

But his soul was far from being as sweet as his countenance. He was violent, foolhardy and quarrelsome, and he often provoked boys older than himself. He was suspected of being immoral; and in truth the soldiers garrisoned in the towns set no good example. Little notice, however, was taken of his bad habits. That which most vexed Sieur Guillaume was that Pierrolet was an Armagnac and for ever quarrelling with the Burgundians. The canon repeatedly told him that such a state of mind was not only wicked but absolutely devilish in that good town of Troyes, where the late Henry V of England had celebrated his marriage with Madame Catherine of France and where the English were the rightful masters, for all power is of God. *Omnis potestas a Deo.*

The guests having taken their places, Sieur Guillaume recited the *Benedicite* and every one began to eat in silence. Sieur Jean Coquemard was the first to speak. Turning to Sieur Jean Bruant, his neighbour, he said:

"You are wise and learned. Did you fast yesterday?"

"It was seemly so to do," replied Sieur Jean

Bruant. "The eve of the Epiphany is described in the rubric as a vigil, and a vigil is a fast."

"Pardon me," retorted Sieur Jean Coquemard. "But I, together with notable doctors of divinity, hold that an austere fast accords ill with the joy of the faithful as they recall the birth of our Saviour, which the Church continues to celebrate until the Epiphany."

"In my opinion," replied Sieur Jean Bruant, "those who do not fast on these vigils have fallen away from our ancient piety."

"And in mine," cried Sieur Jean Coquemard, "those who prepare by fasting for the most joyful of festivals are guilty of following customs censored by the majority of our bishops."

The dispute between the two canons began to wax bitter.

"Not to fast! What lack of zeal!" exclaimed Sieur Jean Bruant.

"To fast! How obstinate!" said Sieur Jean Coquemard. "You are one of those proud, reckless men who love to stand alone."

"You are one of the weak who meekly follow the corrupt herd. But even in these wicked times of ours I have my authorities. *Quidam asserunt in vigilia Epiphaniæ jejunandum.*"

"That settles the question. *Non jejunetur!*"

"Peace! Peace!" cried Sieur Guillaume from

the depths of his great raised seat. "You are both right : it is praiseworthy of you, Jean Coquemard, to partake of food on the eve of the Epiphany as a sign of rejoicing, and of you, Jean Bruant, to fast on the same vigil, since you fast with seemly gladness."

This utterance was approved by the whole Chapter.

"Not Solomon himself could have pronounced a wiser judgment," cried *Sieur Pierre Corneille*.

And *Sieur Guillaume*, having put to his lips his goblet of silver gilt, *Sieurs Jean Bruant, Jean Coquemard, Thomas Alépée, Simon Thibouville, Denys Petit, Pierre Corneille, Barnabé Videloup* and *François Pigouchel* all cried with one voice :

"The King drinks ! the King drinks !"

The uttering of this cry was part of the festival, and the guest who failed to join in it risked a severe penalty.

Sieur Guillaume, seeing that the flagons were empty, ordered more wine to be brought, and the servants grated the horse-radish which should stimulate the thirst of the guests.

"To the health of *Monsignor, Bishop of Troyes* and of the Regent of France," said *Sieur Guillaume*, rising from his canonical seat.

"Right willingly, *sieur*," said *Thibault of Saulges*, knight. "But it is an open secret that our Bishop is disputing with the Regent touching the double

tithe which Monsignor of Bedford is exacting from Churchmen, under the pretext of financing the Crusade against the Hussites. Thus we are about to mingle in one toast the healths of two enemies."

"Ha ha!" replied *Sieur Guillaume*. "But healths are proposed for peace and not for war. I drink to King Henry VI's Regent of France and to the health of Monsignor, Bishop of Troyes, whom we all elected two years ago."

The canons, raising their goblets, drank to the health of the Bishop and of the Regent Bedford.

Meanwhile there was raised at the bottom of the table a young and as yet piping voice, which cried:

"To the health of the Dauphin Louis, the true King of France!"

It was the little *Pierrolet*, whose Armagnac sympathies, heated by the canon's wine, were finding expression.

No one took any notice, and, *Sieur Guillaume* having drunk again, they all cried in chorus:

"The King drinks! The King drinks!"

The guests, all speaking at once, were noisily discussing matters both sacred and profane.

"Have you heard," said *Thibault de Saulges*, "that the Regent has sent ten thousand English to take Orleans?"

"In that case," said *Sieur Guillaume*, "the town will fall into their hands, as have already Jargeau

and Beaugency, and so many goodly cities of the kingdom."

"That remains to be seen!" said the little Pierrolet, growing red.

But, he being at the far end of the table, once again no one heard him.

"Let us drink, monsignors," said Sieur Guillaume, who was doing the honours of his table lavishly.

And he set the example by raising his great cup of silver gilt.

More loudly than ever the cry resounded:

"The King drinks! The King drinks!"

But after the thunder of the toast had rolled away, Sieur Pierre Corneille, who was seated rather low down at the table, said bitterly:

"Monsignors, I denounce the little Pierrolet. He did not cry 'The King drinks!' Thereby he has transgressed our rights and customs, and he must be punished."

"He must be punished!" repeated in chorus Sieurs Denys Petit and Barnabé Videloup.

"Let chastisement be meted out to him," said, in his turn, Sieur Guillaume. "His hands and face must be smeared with soot, for such is the custom."

"It is the custom!" cried all the canons together.

And Sieur Pierre Corneille went to fetch soot from the chimney, while Sieurs Thomas Alépée and

Simon Thibouville, laughing unrestrainedly, threw themselves upon the child and held his arms and legs.

But Pierrolet escaped out of their hands, then, standing with his back to the wall, he drew a little dagger from his belt and swore that he would plunge it into the throat of anyone who came near him.

Such violence highly amused the canons, and especially *Sieur Guillaume*. Rising from his seat, he went up to his little secretary, followed by *Pierre Corneille*, who held in his hand a shovelful of soot.

"It is I," he said in unctuous tones, "who for his punishment will make of this naughty child a negro, a servant of that black King *Balthazar* who came to the manger. *Pierre Corneille*, hold out the shovel."

And, with a gesture as deliberate as that with which he would have sprinkled holy water upon the faithful, he threw a pinch of soot into the face of the child who, rushing upon him, plunged his dagger into *Sieur Guillaume's* stomach.

The canon uttered a long sigh and fell with his face to the ground. His guests crowded round him. They saw that he was dead.

Pierrolet had disappeared. A search was made for him all over the town, but he could not be found. Later it became known that he had enlisted in *Captain La Hire's* company. At the Battle of *Patay*, under the *Maid's* eyes, he took an English captain prisoner and was dubbed a knight.

“LA MUIRON”

“And sometimes, during our long evenings, the Commander-in-Chief would tell us ghost stories, a kind of story in the telling of which he excelled.”—*Mémoires du Comte Lavallette.*



FOR more than three months Bonaparte had been without news from Europe, when on his return from Saint-Jean-d'Acre he sent an envoy to the Turkish admiral under the pretext of negotiating an exchange of prisoners, but in reality in the hope that Sir Sidney Smith would stop this officer on the way and enlighten him as to recent events; whether, as might be expected, these had been unfavourable to the Republic. The General calculated rightly. Sir Sidney had the envoy brought to his ship and received him there with honour. Having entered into conversation, the English commander soon learnt that the Syrian army was totally without despatches or information of any kind. He showed the Frenchman the newspapers lying open on the table and, with perfidious courtesy, invited him to take them away with him.

Bonaparte spent the night in his tent reading

them. In the morning he had resolved to return to France in order to assume the government in the place of those who were on the point of being overthrown. Once he had set foot on the soil of the Republic, he would crush the weak and violent Directory which was rendering the country a prey to fools and rogues, and he alone would occupy the vacant place. Before he could carry out his plan, however, he must cross the Mediterranean in defiance of adverse winds and British squadrons. But Bonaparte could see nothing save his purpose and his star. By an extraordinary stroke of good luck he had received the Directory's permission to leave the Egyptian army and to appoint his own successor.

He summoned Admiral Gantheaume, who had been at head-quarters since the destruction of the fleet, and instructed him quickly and secretly to arm two Venetian frigates, which were at Alexandria, and to direct them to a certain lonely point upon the coast. In a sealed document he appointed General Kléber Commander-in-Chief. Then, under the pretext of making a tour of inspection, taking with him a squadron of guides, he went to the Marabout inlet. On the evening of the 7th of Fructidor in the year VII, at the junction of two roads, whence the sea was visible, he came face to face with General Menou, who was returning with

his escort to Alexandria. Finding it impossible and unnecessary to keep his secret any longer, he took a brusque farewell of these soldiers, urged them to acquit themselves well in Egypt and said :

“ If I have the good luck to set foot in France, the reign of the chatterboxes will be over ! ”

He seemed to say this spontaneously and, so to speak, in spite of himself. Yet such an announcement was premeditated and intended to justify his flight as well as to suggest his future power.

He jumped into the boat, which at nightfall drew alongside of the frigate, *La Muiron*. Admiral Gantheaume welcomed him beneath his flag with these words :

“ I command under your star.”

And he set sail immediately. With the General were Lavallette, his aide-de-camp, Monge and Berthollet. The frigate, *La Carrère*, which served as a convoy, had on board the wounded generals, Lannes and Murat, and Messieurs Denon, Costaz and Parseval-Grandmaison.

Hardly had they started when the wind dropped. The Admiral proposed to return to Alexandria lest dawn should find them in sight of Aboukir, where the enemy's fleet lay at anchor. The faithful Lavallette entreated the General to agree. But Bonaparte pointed seawards.

“ Have no fear. We shall get through.”

After midnight a fair breeze began to blow. By dawn the flotilla was out of sight of land. As Bonaparte was walking alone on deck, Berthollet came up to him.

“General, you were well advised to tell Lavallette not to be afraid and that we should be able to continue on our course.”

Bonaparte smiled.

“I reassured one who is weak but devoted. Your character, Berthollet, is different, and to you I shall speak differently. The future must not be counted upon. The present alone matters. One must dare and calculate, and leave the rest to luck.”

And, quickening his steps, he muttered :

“Dare . . . calculate . . . avoid any cast-iron plan . . . conform to circumstances, follow where they lead. Take advantage of the slightest as well as of the greatest opportunities. Attempt only the possible, and all that is possible.”

At dinner that day, when the General reproached Lavallette with his timidity on the previous evening, the aide-de-camp replied that at present his fears were different but not less, and that he was not ashamed to confess them, because they concerned the fate of Bonaparte, consequently the fate of France and of the world.

“I learned from Sir Sidney’s secretary,” he said, “that the commodore believes in keeping out of

sight during a blockade. So, knowing his strategy and his character, we must expect to find him in our way. And in that case . . .”

Bonaparte interrupted him.

“In that case you cannot doubt that our intuition and our skill would rise superior to our danger. But you flatter that young madman when you regard him as capable of any consecutive and methodical action. Smith ought to be captain of a fire-ship.”

Bonaparte was not fair to the formidable commander who had been the cause of his misfortune at Saint-Jean-d’Acre ; and his injustice arose doubtless from a wish to attribute his failure to a turn of fortune rather than to his adversary’s skill.

The Admiral raised his hand as if to emphasize the resolve which he was about to express.

“If we meet the English cruisers, I will go on board *La Carrère*, and, you may depend upon it, I will keep them so well occupied that they will give *La Muiron* time to escape.”

Lavallette opened his mouth. He was about to observe that *La Muiron* was not a fast sailer and that consequently such an opportunity would be lost upon her. But he feared to displease the General, and swallowed his words. Bonaparte, however, read his thoughts ; and, taking him by the coat button, said :

“Lavallette, you are a good fellow, but you will never be a good soldier. You never think enough of your advantages, and you are for ever concerned with irreparable disadvantages. We cannot make this frigate a fast sailer. But you must think of the crew, animated with the brightest enthusiasm and capable of working miracles, if need be. You forget that our boat is *La Muiron*. I myself gave her that name. I was at Venice. Invited to christen the frigate which had just been armed, I seized the opportunity of honouring the memory of one who was dear to me, of my aide-de-camp, who fell on the bridge of Arcola while protecting his General with his own body under a hail of shot and shell. In this ship we sail to-day. Can you doubt that its name augurs well for us?”

For a while longer he continued to hearten them with his glowing words. He then remarked that he would retire to rest. It was known on the morrow that he had decided to endeavour to avoid the British squadrons by some four or five weeks’ sailing along the African coast.

Henceforth day followed day in uneventful monotony. *La Muiron* kept in sight of the low, unfrequented coast, which was not likely to be reconnoitred by the enemy’s ships, and every half league she tacked without venturing out to sea. Bonaparte passed his days in conversation and in reverie.

Sometimes he was heard to murmur the names of Ossian and Fingal. Sometimes he asked his aide-de-camp to read aloud Vertot's *Revolutions** or Plutarch's *Lives*. He appeared neither anxious nor impatient, nor preoccupied, more, probably, through a natural disposition to live in the present than as the result of self-control. He seemed to take a melancholy pleasure in contemplating that sea which, whether angry or serene, threatened his destiny and separated him from his goal. On rising from table, when the weather was fine, he would go on deck and half recline on a gun-carriage in the same somewhat unsociable and forlorn attitude that was his when, as a child, he would lie propped up by his elbows on the rocks of his native isle. The two scientists, the Admiral, the Captain of the frigate and the aide-de-camp, Lavallette, would stand round him. And the talk which he carried on by fits and starts, most frequently turned on some new scientific discovery. Monge was not a brilliant talker; but his conversation showed him to be a clear, logical thinker. Inclined to consider utility even in physics, he was always a patriot and a good citizen. Berthollet was a better

* René de Vertot (1655-1735), author of three books on revolutions: *Histoire des Révolutions de Suède*, 1695; *Histoire des Révolutions de Portugal*, 1711; *Histoire des Révolutions arrivées dans le gouvernement de la République romaine*, 1720.—*Trans.*

philosopher and more given to evolving general theories.

“ It will not do,” he said, “ to represent chemistry as the mysterious science of metamorphoses, a new Circe, waving her magic wand over nature. Such ideas may flatter vivid imaginations ; but they will not satisfy thoughtful minds, who are striving to prove that the transformations of bodies are subject to the general laws of physics.”

He had a presentiment that the reactions, which the chemist provokes and observes, occur under precise mechanical conditions which some day may be the subject of exact calculation. And, constantly recurring to this idea, he would apply it to a variety of data, known or surmised. One evening Bonaparte, who had no sympathy with pure speculation, brusquely interrupted him :

“ Your theories . . . ! Mere soap-bubbles born of a breath and dissipated by a breath. Chemistry, Berthollet, is no more than a game when not applied to the requirements of war or industry. In all his researches the man of science should set before him some definite great and useful object, like Monge, who, in order to manufacture gunpowder, sought nitre in cellars and stables.”

But Monge himself, as well as Berthollet, insisted on representing to the General the necessity of understanding phenomena and submitting them to

general laws, before attempting practical applications, and they argued that any other procedure would lead to the dangerous obscurity of empiricism.

Bonaparte agreed. But he feared empiricism less than ideology. And suddenly he inquired of Berthollet :

“ Do you, with your explanations, hope to penetrate into the infinite mystery of nature, to enter into the unknown ? ”

Berthollet replied that, without pretending to explain the universe, the scientist rendered humanity the greatest service by substituting a rational view of natural phenomena for the terrors of ignorance and superstition.

“ Is he not man’s true benefactor,” added Berthollet, “ who delivers him from the phantoms introduced into the soul by the fear of an imaginary hell, who rescues him from the yoke imposed by priests and soothsayers, who expels from his mind the terrors of dreams and omens ? ”

Night rested like a vast shadow on the great expanse of sea. In a moonless and cloudless sky, multitudes of stars glittered like a suspended shower. For a moment the General remained lost in meditation. Then, lifting up his head and half rising, he pointed to the dome of heaven, and with the uncultured voice of the young herdsman and the hero of antiquity he pierced the silence :

“ Mine is a soul of marble which nothing can perturb, a heart inaccessible to common weaknesses. But you, Berthollet, do you understand sufficiently what life and death are? Have you explored their confines so far as to be able to affirm that they are without mystery? Are you sure that all apparitions are no more than the phantoms of a diseased brain? Can you explain all presentiments? General La Harpe had the stature and the heart of a Grenadier. His intelligence was in its element in battle. There it shone. At Fombio, for the first time, on the evening before his death, he was struck dumb, as one who is stunned, frozen by a strange and sudden fear. You deny apparitions. Monge, did you not meet Captain Aubelet in Italy? ”

At this question, Monge tried to remember, then shook his head. No, he did not recollect Captain Aubelet.

Bonaparte resumed :

“ I had observed him at Toulon, where he won his epaulettes, like a hero of ancient Greece. He was as young, as handsome, as courageous as a soldier from Platea. Struck by his serious air, his clear-cut features and the look of wisdom on his young countenance, his superior officers had nicknamed him Minerva, and the Grenadiers also called him by that name, though they were ignorant of its significance.”

“ Captain Minerva ! ” cried Monge. “ Why did you not call him that at first ? Captain Minerva was killed beneath the walls of Mantua a few weeks before I arrived in that city. His death had made a great impression, because it was associated with marvellous happenings which were related to me, though I do not remember them exactly. All I recollect is that General Miollis ordered Captain Minerva’s sword and gorget, crowned with laurels, to be carried at the head of the column which one feast day defiled in front of Virgil’s grotto, as a tribute to the memory of the poet of heroes.”

“ Aubelet’s,” resumed Bonaparte, “ was that perfectly serene courage which I have never observed in anyone save Bessières. His passions were of the noblest. And in everything he sacrificed himself. He had a brother in arms, Captain Demarteau, a few years his senior, whom he loved with all the affection of a great heart. Demarteau did not resemble his friend. Impulsive, passionate, equally eager for pleasure and for danger, he was always the life and soul of the camp. Aubelet was the proud devotee of duty, Demarteau was the joyous lover of glory. The latter returned his comrade’s affection. In those two friends the story of Nisus and Euryalus was re-enacted beneath our flag. Extraordinary happenings attended the end, both of one and the other. They were related to me, Monge,

as to you, but I paid better heed, although at that time my mind was occupied with great affairs. I wanted to take Mantua without delay and before a new Austrian army had time to enter Italy. Nevertheless, I found time to read a report of the incidents which had preceded and followed Captain Aubelet's death. Certain of these incidents border on the miraculous. Their cause must either be assigned to unknown faculties, which man may acquire in unique moments, or to the intervention of an intelligence superior to ours.”

“General, you must exclude the second hypothesis,” said Berthollet. “An observer of nature never perceives the intervention of a superior intelligence.”

“I know that you deny the existence of Providence,” replied Bonaparte. “That may be permissible for a scientist shut up in his study, but not for a leader of peoples who can only control the ordinary mind through a community of ideas. If you would govern men, you must think with them on all great subjects. You must move with public opinion.”

And, raising his eyes to the light flaming in the darkness on the pinnacle of the mainmast, he said, with hardly a pause :

“The wind blows from the north.”

He had changed the subject with the suddenness

which was his wont and which had caused some one to say to M. Denon :

“ The General shuts the drawer.”

Admiral Gantheaume observed that they could not expect the wind to change before the first days of autumn.

The light was flaring towards Egypt. Bonaparte looked in that direction. His gaze plunged into space ; and, speaking in staccato tones, he let fall these words :

“ If only they can hold out yonder ! The evacuation of Egypt would be a commercial and military disaster. Alexandria is the capital of the controllers of Europe. Thence, I shall destroy England’s commerce and I shall change the destiny of India. . . . For me, as for Alexander, Alexandria is the fortress, the port, the arsenal whence I start to conquer the world and whither I cause the wealth of Africa and Asia to flow. England can only be conquered in Egypt. If she were to take possession of Egypt, she instead of us would be the mistress of the world. Turkey is on her death-bed. Egypt assures me the possession of Greece. My name shall for ever be inscribed by that of Epaminondas. The fate of the world hangs upon my intelligence and Kléber’s firmness.”

For some days afterwards the General remained silent. He had read to him the *Révolutions de la*

République romaine, the story of which seemed to him to drag unbearably. The aide-de-camp, Lavallette, had to gallop through the Abbé Vertot's pages. And even then Bonaparte's patience would give out, and, snatching the book from the reader's hands, he would ask for Plutarch's *Lives*, of which he never tired. He considered that, though lacking broad and clear vision, they were permeated with an overpowering sense of destiny.

So one day, after his siesta, he summoned his reader and bade him resume the *Life of Brutus*, where he had left off on the previous evening. Lavallette opened the book at the page marked, and read :

“ Then, as he and Cassius were preparing to leave Asia with the whole of their army (the night was very dark, and but a feeble light burned in his tent ; a profound silence reigned throughout the whole camp and he himself was wrapt in thought), it seemed to him that he saw some one enter his tent. He looked towards the door and he perceived a horrible spectre, whose countenance was strange and terrifying, who approached him and stood there in silence. He had the courage to address it. ‘ Who art thou,’ he asked, ‘ a man or a god ? What comest thou to do here and what desirest thou of me ? ’ ‘ Brutus,’ replied the phantom, ‘ I am thy evil genius, and thou shalt see me at Philippi.’ Then

Brutus, unperturbed, said : ' I will see thee there.' Straightway the phantom disappeared, and Brutus, to whom the servants, whom he summoned, said that they had seen and heard nothing, continued to busy himself with his affairs."

" It is here," cried Bonaparte, " in this watery solitude, that such a scene has its most gruesome effect. Plutarch tells the story well. He knows how to give it animation, how to make his characters stand out. But he does not seize the relation between one event and another. One cannot escape one's fate. Brutus, who had a commonplace mind, believed in strength of will. A really superior man would not labour under that delusion. He sees how necessity limits him. He does not dash himself against it. To be great is to depend on everything. I depend on events which a mere nothing determines. Wretched creatures that we are, we are powerless to change the nature of things. Children are self-willed. A great man is not. What is a human life? The curve described by a projectile."

The Admiral arrived and told Bonaparte that the wind had at length changed. The passage must be attempted. The danger was urgent. Vessels detached from the English fleet, anchored off Syracuse, commanded by Nelson, were guarding the sea which they were about to traverse between Tunis and Sicily. Once the flotilla had been sighted the

terrible Admiral would be down upon them in a few hours.

Gantheaume doubled Cape Bon by night with all lights out. The night was clear. The watch sighted a ship's lights to the north-east. The anxiety which consumed Lavallette had attacked even Monge. Bonaparte, seated, as usual, on his gun-carriage, displayed a tranquillity which might be deemed real or simulated according to the view taken of his fatalism! whether it were merely the effect of a sanguine temperament and a capacity for self-deception or simply one of his numerous poses. After discussing with Monge and Berthollet various matters of physics, mathematics and military science, he went on to speak of certain superstitions from which, perhaps, his mind was not completely emancipated.

“You deny the miraculous,” he said to Monge. “But we live and die in the midst of the miraculous. You told me the other day that you had scornfully put out of your mind the extraordinary happenings associated with Captain Aubelet's death. Perhaps Italian credulity had embroidered them too elaborately. And that may excuse you. Listen to me. On the 9th of September, at midnight, Captain Aubelet was in bivouac before Mantua. The overpowering heat of the day had been followed by a night freshened by the mists rising from the marshy plain. Aubelet, feeling his cloak, became aware that

it was wet. And, as he was shivering slightly, he went near to a fire which the Grenadiers had lit in order to heat their soup, and, seated on a pack-saddle, he warmed his feet. Gradually the night and the mist enveloped him. In the distance he heard the neighing of horses and the regular cries of the sentinels. The captain had been there for some time, anxious, sad, his eyes fixed on the ashes in the brazier, when a tall form rose noiselessly at his side. He felt it near him and dared not turn his head. Nevertheless, he did turn, and recognized his friend, Captain Demarteau, in his usual attitude, his left hand on his hip and swaying slightly to and fro. At this sight Captain Aubelet felt his hair stand on end. He could not doubt the presence of his brother-in-arms, and yet he could not believe it, for he knew that Captain Demarteau was on the Maine with Jourdan, who was threatening the Archduke Charles. But his friend's aspect increased Aubelet's alarm, for though Demarteau's appearance was perfectly natural there was in it notwithstanding something unfamiliar. It was Demarteau, and yet there was something in him which could not fail to inspire fear. Aubelet opened his mouth. But his tongue froze, he could utter no sound. It was the other who spoke: 'Farewell! I go where I must. We shall meet to-morrow!' He departed with a noiseless step.

“On the morrow, Aubelet was sent to reconnoitre at San Giorgio. Before going, he summoned his first lieutenant and gave him such instructions as would enable him to replace his captain. ‘I shall be killed to-day,’ he added, ‘as surely as Demarteau was killed yesterday.’

“And he described to several officers what he had seen in the night. They believed him to be suffering from an attack of the fever which had begun to attack the troops encamped in the Mantuan marshes.

“Aubelet’s company completed its reconnaissance of the San Giorgio Fort without hindrance. Having achieved its object, it fell back on our positions. It was marching under the cover of an olive wood. The first lieutenant, approaching the captain, said to him: ‘Now, Captain Minerva, you no longer doubt that we shall bring you back alive?’

“Aubelet was about to reply, when a bullet whistled through the leaves and struck him on the forehead.

“A fortnight later a letter from General Joubert, which the Directory communicated to the Italian army, announced the death of the brave Captain Demarteau, who fell on the field of honour on the 9th of September.”

As soon as he had finished his story the General

left the group of silent listeners, to pace the deck with long strides and in silence.

“General,” said Gantheaume, “we have passed the most dangerous part of our course.”

The next day he bore towards the north, intending to sail along the Sardinian coast as far as Corsica and thence to make for the coast of Provence ; but Bonaparte wished to land at a headland in Languedoc, fearing that Toulon might be occupied by the enemy.

La Muiron was making for Port-Vendres when a squall threw her back on Corsica and compelled her to put into Ajaccio. The whole population of the island flocked thither to greet their compatriot and crowned the heights dominating the gulf. After a few hours' rest, hearing that the whole French coast was clear of the enemy, they set sail for Toulon. The wind was fair, but not strong.

Then, amidst the tranquillity which he had communicated to all, Bonaparte alone appeared agitated, impatient to land, now and again clapping his small hand suddenly to his sword. The ardent desire to reign which had been fermenting within him for three years, the spark of Lodi, had set him in a blaze. One evening, while the indented coast-line of his native island was fading away into the distance, he suddenly began to talk with a rapidity which confused the syllables of the words he spoke :

“If a stop is not put to it, chatterers and fools will complete the downfall of France. Germany ruined at Stockach, Italy on the Trebbia; our armies beaten, our Ministers assassinated, contractors gorged with gold, our magazines empty and neglected, invasion imminent, to this a weak and dishonest government has brought us.

“Upright men are authority’s only support. The corrupt fill me with an invincible loathing. With them government is impossible.”

Monge, who was a patriot, said firmly :

“Probity is as necessary to liberty as corruption to tyranny.”

“Probity,” replied the General, “is a natural and useful quality in men born to govern.”

The sun was dipping its reddened and magnified disc beneath the misty circle of the horizon. Eastward the sky was sown with light clouds like the petals of a falling rose. On the surface of the sea the blue and rosy waves rolled softly. A ship’s sail appeared on the horizon, and the telescope of the officer on duty showed her to be flying the British flag.

“Have we escaped countless dangers only to perish so near our desired haven!” exclaimed Lavallette.

Bonaparte shrugged his shoulders.

“Is it still possible to doubt my good luck and my destiny?”

And he continued his train of thought :

“ A clean sweep must be made of these rogues and fools. They must be replaced by a compact government, swift and sure in action, like the lion. There must be order. Without order, there can be no administration, without administration, no credit, no money, but the ruin of the State and of individuals. A stop must be put to brigandage, to speculation, to social dissolution. What is France without a government? Thirty millions of grains of sand. Power is everything. The rest nothing. In the wars of Vendée forty men made themselves the masters of a department. The whole mass of the people desire peace at any price, order and an end of quarrelling. Fear of Jacobins, Émigrés, Chouans will throw them into the arms of a master.”

“ And this master? ” inquired Berthollet. “ He will doubtless be a military leader? ”

“ Not at all,” replied Bonaparte swiftly. “ Not at all! A soldier will never be the master of this nation, a nation illuminated by philosophy and science. If any General were to attempt the assumption of power, his audacity would soon be punished. Hoche thought of doing so. I know not whether it was love of pleasure or a true appreciation of the situation that restrained him; but the blow will assuredly recoil on any soldier who attempts it. For my part, I admire that French

impatience of the military yoke, and I have no hesitation in admitting that the civil power should be pre-eminent in the State.”

On hearing such a declaration, Monge and Berthollet looked at one another in amazement. They knew that Bonaparte, in spite of perils, known and unknown, was about to grasp at power ; and they failed to comprehend words which would seem to deny him that which he so ardently coveted. Monge, who, at the bottom of his heart, was a lover of liberty, began to rejoice. But the General, who divined their thoughts, replied to them immediately :

“ Of course, if the nation were to discover in a soldier such civil qualities as would render him an efficient administrator and ruler, it would place him at the head of affairs ; but it would have to be as a civil not as a military leader. Such must needs be the feeling of any civilized, intelligent and educated nation.”

After a moment's silence, Bonaparte added :

“ I am a member of the Institute.”

For a few moments longer the English ship was visible on the purpling belt of the horizon ; then it disappeared.

On the morning of the next day, the watch sighted the coast of France. Yonder was Port-Vendres. Bonaparte fixed his gaze on the low, faint streak of land. A tumult of thoughts was surging

in his mind. He had a striking and confused impression of arms and togas ; in the silence of the sea an immense clamour filled his ears. And amidst visions of grenadiers, magistrates, legislators and human crowds, he saw Josephine smiling, languishing, her handkerchief to her lips, her throat bare. The thought of her burned in his blood.

“ General,” said Gantheaume, pointing to the coast, which was growing bright in the morning sunshine, “ I have brought you whither destiny called you. You, like Æneas, reach a shore promised you by the gods.”

Bonaparte landed at Fréjus on the 17th of Vendémiaire in the year VIII.

THE CHÂTEAU
DE VAUX-LE-VICOMTE

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

A translation of the verses quoted in
The Chateau de Vaux-le-Vicomte, by
Professor F. C. de Sumichrast, will
be found in the Appendix.

PREFACE



IN 1656, Foucquet was forty-one years of age. For five years he had been Attorney-General in the Paris Parliament, and for three Comptroller of Finance, having been appointed to the control of the Treasury at the close of the troubles which had afflicted France during the minority of Louis XIV. He had successfully weathered a difficult period, and had acquired no little confidence in his genius and his guiding star. Now, in the prime of life, feeling securely established in office, he proceeded to order his life in accordance with the magnificence of his tastes. Ambitious, pleasure-loving, adoring all that was great and beautiful, sensitive to all that exalts or caresses the soul, he called upon the Arts to surround him with the symbols of glory and of pleasure. The miracles of Vaux were the outcome of this demand, which was first satisfied, then cruelly punished.

On the 2nd of August, 1656, in the presence of Le Vau, his architect, Foucquet signed the plans

and estimates for this mansion of Vaux, which was to be built within four years, in a new and noble style. It was to be adorned with magnificent paintings, with statues and tapestries ; it was to command a view over gardens, grottoes and entrancing ornamental waters ; to abound in gold plate and gems and valuables of every kind. It was destined to receive, with a luxury hitherto unknown, the most powerful and the most beautiful, the Court and the King. Then, when the last lights of a miraculous festival had been extinguished, it was to be the home, for ever, of solitude and desolation.

Nevertheless, to Nicolas Foucquet remains the honour of having discerned and selected men of superior talent, and of having been the first to employ those great masters of French Art whose works have shed never dying splendour over the reign of Louis XIV. After he had disgraced his Minister, the King could not do better than take from him his architect Louis Le Vau, his painter Charles Le Brun and his gardener André Le Nostre, and remove to Paris the looms which Foucquet had set up at Maincy and which became the Manufacture des Gobelins. But there was something which the King could not appropriate : the taste, the feeling for art, the delicate yet profound instinct for the beautiful which endeared the Comptroller to all the artists who worked for him. Notwith-

standing all the benefits the King showered on him, Le Brun regretted his generous host of Vaux.

There is a story that, when he was being tried for his life, on leaving the court, in the custody of an armed escort, he passed the Arsenal where he saw some men at work and asked what they were making. Hearing that they were at work on a basin for a fountain, he turned aside to examine and criticize it. Then, turning to Artagnan, the Musketeer, who was in charge of him, he said, smiling : " You are wondering why I meddle in such a business ? It is because I used to be something of an expert in these matters." And Foucquet spoke the truth. Surely that man was a sincere lover of the arts whom the sight of men at work upon a fountain could suddenly distract from the thought of dungeons and the imminence of the scaffold.

PART I

NICOLAS FOUQUET



THE Foucquets were citizens of Nantes, and in the sixteenth century they traded with the West Indies. By these maritime expeditions they gained great possessions and a peculiar quality of mind, a crafty and audacious spirit which may be discerned in their descendants. Nicolas Fouquet, with whom alone we are concerned here, was born in 1615. He was the third son of François Fouquet, a King's Councillor, and of Marie Maupeou, who had twelve children, six sons and six daughters. This François Fouquet, originally councillor in the Rennes Parliament, purchased a place in the Paris Parliament, became a Councillor of State, and was for a while Ambassador in Switzerland. He was a collector : he formed a collection of medals and books which Peiresc, when he passed through Paris, visited with great interest, jotting down in his note-book* particulars of the more remarkable objects.

* Cf. *Les amateurs de l'ancienne France : Le surintendant*

In the Councillor's artistic hobbies some have sought to discern the origin of the taste displayed by his son Nicolas in the ancient sculpture and in the pictures which he spent great sums in collecting.

As for Marie Maupeou, she came of an old and honourable legal family. Left a widow in 1640, she sought repose, after the discharge of her numerous maternal duties, in the practice of asceticism and in works of Christian charity. In her retreat she lived a life wholly occupied in the giving of alms, the application of remedies and the recitation of prayers. She was one of those strong-minded women who, like Madame Legras and Madame de Miramion, were moved at once to a courageous pity and angelic melancholy by the spectacle of the miseries and crimes of war. The ordering of her life was in almost all respects like that of a Sister of Mercy. Far from rejoicing at the promotion of her sons, it was with deep anxiety that she beheld them yielding to the seductions of a world which she knew to be evil. Nicolas especially and his brother, the Abbé Basile, alarmed her by the extent of their ambition. The

Foucquet, by Edmond Bonnaffé. *Librairie de l'Art*, 1882, p. 12. The book contains particulars drawn from Peiresc's unpublished manuscript. During the course of this work we shall have frequent occasion to quote from this accomplished connoisseur's excellent study.

Comptroller's fall, which disconcerted all France, left her unperturbed. On hearing that her son had been cast down from the heights of pomp and power, she is said to have thrown herself upon her knees, exclaiming: "I thank Thee, O my God! I have always prayed to Thee for his salvation: now the way is open."* This saintly idea implies a perfection, alarming because utterly inhuman: it is difficult to recognize maternal affection thus transfigured and freed from the weakness of the flesh which naturally accompanies it. Yet even this mother, for twenty years dead to the world, was alarmed when she knew that her son's life was threatened. Every day throughout the Comptroller's long trial she was to be seen at the door of the Arsenal, where the Court was sitting, and she petitioned the judges.†

* *Mémoires de Choisy*, Ed. Petitot et Monmerqué, p. 262.

† *Journal d'Olivier d'Ormesson*, Vol. II, p. 60. The unknown author of the dialogues attributed to Molière by M. Louis Auguste Ménard brings Mme Foucquet on to the stage and makes her utter words in keeping with those pious sentiments which were well known to her contemporaries. The fictitious scene which confronts her with Anne of Austria is a paraphrase of the words I have quoted in my text from the *Mémoires de Choisy*.

MME FOUCQUET

Que mon fils est heureux, que j'aime sa prison !
Il est guéri du moins de ce mortel poison.

The young Queen was ill at the time. Foucquet's mother sent her one of the plasters she was in the habit of making for the poor, and she was so fortunate as to save the wife of him who was seeking to ruin her son. At least, the Queen's recovery is generally attributed to Madame Foucquet's remedy. We shall see later that the cure did not change the King's heart.

Par ses malheurs son âme à présent éclairée,
Voit comme dans la Cour elle était égarée.
Plût à Dieu que sa grâce ouvre si bien ses yeux
Qu'il ne les tourne plus que du côté des Cieux.

LA REINE MÈRE

Il peut, quoique Colbert lui déclare la guerre,
Ouvrir encor les yeux du côté de la terre.

MME FOUCQUET

Si la terre, Madame, a du péril pour lui,
J'aime mieux à mes yeux le voir mort aujourd'hui.

Le livre abominable de 1665 qui courait en manuscrit parmi le monde, sous le nom de Molière (comédie en vers sur le procès de Foucquet), découvert et publié sur une copie du temps par Louis-Auguste Ménard. Paris, Firmin Didot et Cie., 1883, 2 vols. Vol. II, p. 116.

The book is neither abominable nor a comedy of any kind. It consists of five Jansenist dialogues in the most insipid style. M. Louis-Auguste Ménard, who attributes this rhymed play to Molière, cannot expect many to share his extraordinary opinion.

This incident, however, refers to the downfall of a fortune of which we must first explain the beginnings, and then the progressive stages. This I shall do without entering into details of administration or business. I am not writing an essay on the politics or finance of the days of Mazarin. My sole endeavour will be to depict the tastes, the manners and the mind of the creator and the host of Vaux. Vaux is the centre of my theme.

In 1635, Nicolas Foucquet, at the age of twenty, entered the magistracy as Master of Requests. The Masters of Requests were regarded as members of the Parliament, in which they sat above the Councillors. From among these officers the Kings had long been accustomed to choose the commissaries whom they despatched into the provinces, to superintend the administration of justice and finance, or to the armies, where they were charged with all that concerned the policing and the maintenance of the troops.

Their journeys were known as the circuits of the Masters of Requests. They gave rise, at a date unknown, to a new office, that of "Intendant," which grew in importance with the increase of the royal power. The young Foucquet, in 1636, was sent as Intendant of justice to the district of Grenoble. The difficulties attending such a mission were great; and Richelieu could not have been ignorant of them.

He had, however, diminished them somewhat by suspending the sittings of the provincial parliament which was the Intendant's natural enemy. But Foucquet found the people of Dauphiné agitated by the memory of the religious wars and ardently engaging in new disputes in respect of certain taxes levied on the goods of the third estate from which the nobility and the clergy were exempt. The decree of the Royal Council which abolished the citizens' grievances remained a dead letter.* Feeling ran high. Foucquet did not succeed in alleviating it. After a revolt, which he had been unable either to prevent or to repress, he was recalled to Paris. From an inexperienced youth of twenty-one Richelieu could not have expected services which could only have been rendered by an old hand, experienced in negotiation, such, for example, as the Intendant of Guyenne, the skilful and resolute Servien. Few to-day consider that the great Minister employed the system of Intendants† as a regular instrument of his policy; this may explain his confiding to an apprentice a mission which he regarded as of secondary importance. The office of Intendant was not a permanent one, so that

* *Histoire du Dauphiné*, by M. le baron de Chapuys-Montlaville. Paris, Dupont, 1828, 2 vols. Vol. II, pp. 460 *et seq.*

† Cf. *Les premiers intendants de justice*, by S. Hanotaux, in *La Revue Historique*, 1882 and 1883.

Foucquet's recall would not be regarded as an absolute disgrace. Nevertheless, during the five years of life and power which yet remained to him, Richelieu, as far as we know, never again employed the young Master of Requests.

But Mazarin, having become first Minister, sent him, in 1647, to the Army of the North, which was under the command of Gassion and Rantzau. The leaders' disagreements were arresting the army's progress. Rantzau was a drunkard whom Gassion could not tolerate. Gassion, sober, energetic and fearless, displayed a brutality insufferable even in a soldier of fortune. He forgot himself so far as to strike in the face a captain of Condé's regiment who had misunderstood his orders. The whole regiment determined to retreat and the officers struck their tents. Only with great difficulty were they persuaded to remain. Touching this incident, Foucquet wrote to Mazarin: "All are agreed that M. le Maréchal de Gassion was seriously at fault in striking the captain of His Royal Highness's regiment. Every one condemned such an action, considering that M. le Maréchal should have sent him to prison, or should even have struck him with his sword, or fired his pistol at him, if he thought it necessary; but that it would have been better not to have resorted to such an extreme measure."

We ought not, I think, to pass over a circumstance

which permitted Foucquet to display, for the first time, as far as we are aware, that spirit of moderation which, until his reason became clouded, enabled him for a time to serve the State so well.

Mazarin was not slow to discern the Intendant's merits. In 1648, at the time of the first disturbances,* thinking to quit Paris and withdraw with the Court to Saint-Germain, he sent Foucquet to Brie "with orders to collect there large stores of grain for the maintenance of the army."† The Intendant established himself at Lagny and commandeered supplies from the peasants of Brie and Ile-de-France. He was then instructed to compile a list of those Parisians who possessed châteaux or country-houses in the suburbs of the city. Promising to preserve these properties from fire and pillage during the war, Mazarin taxed the owners. In reality he mulcted the rich of the money which he needed. When the Fronde was a thing of the past, Foucquet, as procurator of Ile-de-France, accompanied the King into Normandy, Burgundy, Poitou and Guyenne.

On his return from this royal progress, he bought, with the Cardinal's approval, the post of Attorney-General in the Paris Parliament. From this office a certain *Sieur Méliand* retired in Foucquet's

* Of the Fronde.—*Trans.*

† Mazarin's note-book, XI, fol. 85, Biblioth. Nat.,

favour, "receiving in return Foucquet's office of Master of Requests, estimated by the son of the said Sieur Méliand as being worth more than fifty thousand crowns, plus a sum of one hundred thousand crowns in money."*

If Foucquet obtained preferment, it was not without the aid of a young clerk at the War Office, who at that time displayed considerable friendliness towards him, but was destined, eleven years later, to bring about his downfall, to assume his office and endeavour to compass his death. Colbert, who was then on terms of friendship with Foucquet, employed his interest with Le Tellier to recommend the ambitious Intendant. In August, 1650, he wrote to the Secretary of State for War :

"M. Foucquet, who has come here by order of His Eminence, has already on three several occasions assured me that he is possessed of an ardent desire to become one of your special servants and friends because of the peculiar estimation in which he holds your attainments, and that he has no intimate connections with any other person which would prevent his receiving this honour. . . . I thought it would be very suitable, he being a man of birth and merit and even capable, one day, of holding high office, if you in return were to offer

* Unpublished Diary of Dubuisson-Aubenay, cited by M. Chéruel in the *Mémoires sur N. Foucquet*, Vol. I, p. 7.

him some friendly advances, since it is not a question of entering into an engagement which might be burdensome to you, but merely of receiving him favourably and of making him some show of friendship when you meet. If you are of my opinion in this matter, I beg you to let me know as much in the first letter with which you honour me ; nor can I refrain from assuring you, with all the respect which is your due, that I do not think I could possibly repay you a part of all that I owe you in better coin than by acquiring for you a hundred such friends, were I only sufficiently worthy to do so.”*

This is a warm recommendation. We have quoted it in order that the reader may see with what confidence Foucquet inspired his friends, even in those early days, and how highly they thought of him. Moreover, it is interesting to find Colbert praising Foucquet. The latter was installed in his new office on the 10th of October, 1650. He was henceforth the first of the King's servants, at the head of that bar which the two Advocates, General Omer Talon and Jérôme Bignon, had caused to be renowned for its eloquence. As an instrument of that great body which dealt with the administration of justice, controlled political affairs, exercised

* *Histoire de Colbert et de son administration*, by Pierre Clément. Paris, Didier, 1874, Vol. I, p. 15.

an influence over finance, whose jurisdiction extended over Ile-de-France, Picardy, Orléanais, Touraine, Anjou, Maine, Poitou, Angoumois, Champagne, Bourbonnais, Berry, Lyonnais, Forez, Beaujolais and Auvergne, the Attorney-General, Nicolas Foucquet, subjected the Kingdom of the Lilies to the dictates of the Cardinal, Foucquet's genius was too lucid and his views too far-reaching to permit him to hesitate for a moment between such a virtuous fool as the worthy Broussel, who, through very honesty, would have surrendered his disarmed country to the foreigner, and the Minister who had humiliated the house of Austria, threatened the Emperor even in his hereditary dominions, conquered Roussillon, Artois, Alsace, and who now sought to secure for France her natural boundaries.

Even when the Minister's downfall seemed irretrievable he remained attached to Mazarin's fortunes. In 1651, that inauspicious year, he never ceased his endeavours to win supporters in the *bourgeoisie* and in the army, for the exiled Minister on whose head a price had been set. And when the Prince de Condé, in his manifesto of the 12th of April, 1652, confessed that he had formed ties, both within and without the kingdom, with the object of its preservation, it was the Attorney-General, Nicolas Foucquet, who uttered a protest which compelled the Prince to strike out of his manifesto the shame-

ful avowal of his alliance with Spain, the enemy of France. He contributed not a little to ruin the cause of the Princes in Paris. When Turenne had defeated their army near Étampes (5th May, 1652), the Parliament wished to open negotiations for peace. The Attorney-General repaired to Saint-Germain, bearing to the King the complaints of his good city of Paris. The speech which he delivered on this occasion has been preserved. Its general tone is resolute ; its language, sober and concise, contrasting with the obscure and unintelligible style affected by the judicial eloquence of the period. This address is the only example which we possess of Nicolas Foucquet's oratorical talent. It will be found in M. Chéruel's *Mémoires*.* Here are a few passages from it :

“ . . . Sire, I have been commissioned to inform Your Majesty of the destitution to which the majority of your subjects have been reduced. There is no limit to the crimes and excesses committed by the military. Murders, violations, burnings and sacrileges are now regarded merely as ordinary actions ; far from committing them in secret, the perpetrators boast of them openly. To-day, Sire, Your Majesty's troops are living in such licence and

* *Mémoires sur la vie publique et privée de Foucquet*, by A. Chéruel, Inspector-General of Education. Paris, Charpentier, 1862, Vol. I, pp. 86-88.

such disorder that they are by no means ashamed to abandon their posts in order to despoil those of your subjects who have no means of resistance. In broad daylight, in the sight of their officers, without fear of recognition or apprehension of punishment, soldiers break into the houses of ecclesiastics, noblemen and your highest officials. . . .

“ I will not attempt, Sire, to represent to Your Majesty the greatness of the injury done to your cause by such public depredations, and the advantage which your enemies will derive therefrom, when they see the most sacred laws publicly violated, the impunity of crime firmly established, the source of your revenues exhausted, the affections of the people alienated and your authority derided. I shall only entreat Your Majesty, in the name of your Parliament and all your subjects, to be moved to pity by the cries of your poor people, to give ear to the groans and supplications of widows and orphans, and to endeavour to preserve whatever remains, whatever has escaped the fury of those barbarians whose sole desire is for blood and the slaughter of the innocents. . . .

“ Make manifest, Sire, O make manifest at the outset of your reign, your natural kindness of heart, and may the compassion which you will feel for so many sufferers call down the blessings of heaven upon the first years of your majority, which will

doubtless be followed by many and far happier years, if the desires and prayers of your Parliament and of all your good subjects be granted.”

These words had little effect. The war continued ; the people's sufferings increased ; in the city the disturbances became more violent ; several councillors were killed, and the *hôtel de ville* was invaded and pillaged by the populace and by the troops of the Princes. In the face of such disorders, which the magistrates could neither tolerate nor repress, the Attorney-General, accompanied by several notables, members of the Parliament, went to the King, who listened to his counsel. To the Cardinal he demonstrated the necessity of holding the Parliament and the Court in the same place, in order to display to the kingdom the spectacle of the King and his Senate on the one hand and the rebel Princes on the other ; and it was by his advice that a decree was issued on the 31st of July which ordered the removal of the Parliament from Paris to Pontoise, where the Court then was. Foucquet with the utmost energy devoted himself to the execution of this politic measure.

On the 7th of August, the first President, Mathieu Molé, presided at Pontoise over a solemn session in which the members present constituted themselves into the one and only Parliament of Paris. This assembly requested the King to dismiss Mazarin,

and this he did in concert with Mazarin himself, who rightly believed his departure to be necessary. But he counted on speedily resuming his place beside the King. In the meanwhile he corresponded with Foucquet, in whom he placed the utmost confidence, "without reservation of any kind," and whom he consulted on matters of State. Nevertheless, there was one point on which they did not think alike. Mazarin eagerly desired to return to Paris with the King; and, as it seemed, for the time being, that this desire could not be gratified, His Eminence was not displeased that the state entry into the capital should be delayed. Foucquet, on the other hand, was in favour of an immediate return to the Louvre. On this subject he wrote to the Cardinal:

"There is not one of the King's servants, in Paris or out of it, who is not convinced that in order to make himself master of the city the King has only to desire as much, and that if the King sends to the inhabitants asking that two of the city gates shall be held by a regiment of his guards, and then proceeds directly to the Louvre, all Paris will approve such a masterful action and the Princes will be compelled to take flight. There is no doubt that on the very first day the King's orders will be obeyed by all. The rightful officers will be restored to the exercise of their functions, the gates will be closed to enemies; such an amnesty as Your Eminence would

wish will be published, and our friends will be reunited in the Louvre in the King's presence. So universal will be the rejoicing and so loud the public acclamations that no one will be found so bold as to dissent."*

A few days later, on the 21st of October, amid popular acclamation, Louis XIV entered Paris. The stripling monarch brought with him peace, that beneficent peace which had been prepared by the tactful firmness of the Attorney-General.

Now Mazarin's friends had only to hasten his recall. This the Attorney-General and his brother, the Abbé Basile, succeeded in obtaining, and the Cardinal entered Paris on the 3rd of February, 1652. The office of Superintendent of the Finances had then been vacant for a month owing to the death, on the 2nd of January, of the holder, the Duc de La Vieuville. Despite the kingdom's deplorable financial condition, this office was most eagerly coveted. And the very disorder and obscurity which enveloped all the Superintendent's operations excited the hopes of those men whom the Marquis d'Effiat likened to "the cuttle-fish which possesses the art of clouding the water to deceive the eyes of the fisher who spies it."† At that time

* Bibliothèque Nationale, MSS. collection Gaignières. This letter is quoted by Chéruel, I, p. 183.

† *Histoire financière de la France*, by A. Bailly. Paris, 1830, Vol. I, p. 357.

the Superintendent had not the actual handling of the public moneys. Income and expenditure were in the hands of the Treasurers. But he ordered all State expenditure, charging it without appeal to the various resources of the Kingdom. He was answerable to the King alone. If, apparently, all his actions were subject to a strict control, in reality he worked in absolute secrecy. In the year we have now reached, 1653, the Treasury's poverty and the Cardinal's laxity permitted every abuse. Money must be found at any cost ; all expedients were good and all rules might be infringed.

Things had been going badly for a long while. Since the Regent, Marie de Médicis, had madly dissipated the savings amassed by the prudent Sully, the State had subsisted upon detestable expedients, such as the creation of offices, the issue of Government Stocks, the sale of charters of pardon, the alienation of rights and domains. The Treasury was in the hands of plunderers, no accounts were kept. In 1626, Superintendent d'Effiat found it impossible to arrive at any accurate knowledge of the resources at the State's disposal or at the amount of expenditure incurred by the military and naval services. Richelieu, when he came into power, began by condemning to death a few of the tax farmers-general. Had it not been for " those necessities which do not admit of the delay imposed

by formalities," he might, perhaps, have restored the finances to order. But "those necessities" overwhelmed him and compelled him to resort to fresh expedients. He was driven to court the tax-farmers, whom he would rather have hanged, and at a high rate of interest to borrow from them the King's money which they were detaining in their coffers. Exports, imposts and the salt tax were all controlled by the tax-farmers. An Italian adventurer, Signor Particelli d' Hémery, whom Mazarin appointed Superintendent in 1646, created one hundred and sixty-seven offices and alienated the revenue of 87,600,000 livres of capital. In 1648 the State suffered a shameful bankruptcy and the troubles of the Fronde supervened, aggravating yet further a situation which would have been desperate in any country other than inventive and fertile France.

The office of Superintendent, which the worthy La Vieuville had held since 1649, was disputed after his death by the Marshals de l'Hôpital and de Villeroy, by the President de Maisons, who had held it already during the civil war, by Abel Servien, who during a life already long had proved himself a harsh and precise administrator, a skilful man of business and a thoroughly honest man, and, finally, by Nicolas Foucquet, who in public opinion was unlikely to be appointed.

Foucquet, on the very day of La Vieuville's death, had written the Cardinal a letter, partly in cipher, of which the following is the text :

" I was impatiently awaiting the return of Your Eminence in order to inform you in detail of all that I have learned of the cause of past disorders and their remedies ; but as the bad administration of public finance is one of the chief causes of the discreditable condition of public affairs, the death of the Superintendent and the necessity of appointing his successor compel me to explain to Your Eminence in this letter what I had determined to communicate to you by word of mouth on your arrival, and to impress upon you the importance of choosing some one of acknowledged probity who will be trusted by the public and who will keep inviolate faith with Your Eminence. I will venture to say that, in the inquiries which I have made into the means of ending the present evils and avoiding still greater ones in future, I have found that everything depended upon the will of the Superintendent. Perhaps I should be able to make myself useful to His Majesty and Your Eminence were you to think fit to employ me in this office. I have studied the means of filling it successfully. I know that there would be nothing inconsistent in my employment ; and several of my friends, to whom I owe this idea, have promised me in this connection to make efforts

to render services to the King of a nature too considerable to be ignored. It therefore remains for Your Eminence to judge of the capacity with which eighteen years' service in the Council as Master of Requests and in various other offices may have endowed me ; and as for my affection for you and my fidelity in your service, I flatter myself that Your Eminence is persuaded that I am inferior to no one in the Kingdom. My brother will be my surety ; and I am certain that he would never pledge his word to Your Eminence, whatever interest he may feel in that which concerns me, were he not fully satisfied as to my intentions and my conduct hitherto and had we not thoroughly discussed the interests of Your Eminence in this matter. Once again let me protest that you may rely upon us absolutely, and that you will never be disappointed, since no one in the world has more at heart the advantage and the glory of Your Eminence. I entreat you to let no one hear of this affair until it is settled."

At the invitation of his supporters, Mazarin returned to Paris, very discreetly, on the 3rd of February. One of his first acts was to appoint a Superintendent. He divided the office between Nicolas Foucquet, his own supporter, and Abel Servien, whom his own character and public opinion singled out for this employment. To act in conjunction with the two Superintendents

he appointed three Directors of Finance, one Comptroller-General and eight Intendants. Such an arrangement served to please two people; but it had the disadvantage of costing the Treasury a million livres a year. As a matter of fact, it was, as we shall see, to cost much more. According to the terms of his commission, Fouquet was in no way subordinate to his colleague, but age, experience, vigilant industry and a tried and distinguished probity gave Servien the chief authority. Fouquet was young; he might wait. He held the office which he had so greatly desired. Alas, in desiring it, he had desired what was to be his ruin! Henceforth his pious mother might apply to him the words of Scripture: *Et tribuit eis petitionem eorum.*

If he speedily entered upon the path of mere expediency, can we be surprised? Both necessity and the Cardinal's wishes drove him to it. In 1654, he found money necessary to oppose an army led by the rebel Condé. How? By creating new offices and selling them to the highest bidder. A detestable method; but it is questionable whether, considering the state of the Treasury, it would have been possible to devise any better. At all events, at this cost the Spaniards were defeated. Unhappily there is no doubt whatever that Fouquet had to provide not only for the expenses of the war, but for the exigencies of Mazarin, who, through the

medium of Colbert, obtained from the Treasury the millions with which he enriched his family. Mazarin himself became a farmer of the revenue and derived enormous profits from the bread of the wretched soldiers. "By appearing under the name of Albert, or another," he concealed his part in these transactions. The letter is extant in which he himself suggests this broker's trick. He also made use of what were called *ordonnances de Comptant*. The term was applied to decrees authorizing the payment of money, the employment of which was not specified. To-day we should describe it as dipping into the secret funds ; and the Cardinal did dip into them with both hands. Sometimes Foucquet endeavoured to resist these criminal demands, but in the end he always gave way. Mazarin must have known that he was not intractable, since he always appealed to him rather than to Servien, even in matters like orders for the payment of officials which were the special function of the senior Superintendent. Foucquet received certain sums from the proceeds of tax-farming : from the farmers of the salt-tax he received one hundred and twenty thousand livres a year ; from the farmers of the Bordeaux convoy fifty thousand livres ; from the farmers of the customs one hundred and forty thousand livres. The clerks who handled this last contribution added a sum of twenty thousand livres

for themselves. It is probable that the bargain was not concluded without the distribution of a few "bonuses" in the office. And when we recollect that these customs were duties imposed on wine and on food and drink in general, on the very life, therefore, of the poor, one cannot refrain from cursing Mazarin's murderous and impious cupidity, for it was for the Cardinal that Foucquet deducted these sums. He remitted them without receiving any formal receipt, and there is reason to believe that he himself kept some part of them.

Following Mazarin's example, Foucquet himself became a tax-farmer under a false name; moreover, he lent the State's money to the State itself, and was repaid with heavy interest. Again, following Mazarin's example, he made the public Treasury pay the cost of the promotion and the alliances of his family. On the 12th of February, 1657, his only daughter by his marriage with Marie Fourché, lady of the manor of Quehillac, married the eldest son of the Comte de Charost, Governor of Calais and Captain of the King's Guard. She brought her husband five hundred thousand livres. When this alliance was contracted, the first Madame Foucquet was dead and the Superintendent had married as his second wife Marie-Madeleine de Castille-Villemareuil, the only daughter of François de Castille, President of one of the Chambers of the

Paris Parliament.* The Castilles were merchants, reputed to be very wealthy, who had certainly made rich marriages. Marie-Madeleine attracted no attention as long as her family was happy. She doubtless played but an insignificant part in entertainments that offended her modesty and the brilliance of which was intended rather to please her rivals than herself. At all events, it would seem that her husband always esteemed her as she deserved and, where she was concerned, never wholly relinquished the urbanity that was natural to him. He was one of those men who understand how to please a woman while they are deceiving her. In the Superintendent's house a work of art or a statue celebrated the apparent union of husband and wife. In France it was then becoming the fashion to represent as allegorical figures the great men whom earlier painters would have portrayed in the costume and with the attributes of their patron saints. Conforming to the new custom, the Superintendent ordered from his favourite sculptor, the clever Michel Anguier, a group of Madame Fouquet and her four children. She appeared as Charity. The

* In 1651, Fouquet received with Marie-Madeleine de Castille, the daughter of François de Castille, his wife, one hundred thousand livres, the house in the Rue du Temple, the abode of the Castille family, as well as the buildings adjoining, which were let at 2200 livres. (Cf. Jal, *Dictionnaire*, article on Fouquet.)

group was said to be one of the master's finest works. Guillet de Saint-Georges, in his *Vie de Michel Anguier*, expressly says that Foucquet ordered from this artist "a Charity, bearing in her arms a sleeping child, with another at her feet and two close at hand, to represent Madame Foucquet and her children and to testify the affection and unity which reigned in this family."*

It was an act of homage at once commonplace and ostentatious, yet just and prophetic, rendered to a wife whose fine nobility of heart only misfortune was to reveal. Somewhat retiring in seasons of prosperity, it was only when those whom she loved were unhappy that Madame Foucquet showed her true character. During the lengthy investigations of the accusers, Madame Foucquet saw that her husband's furniture, which had been placed under a seal, was carefully guarded; and this vigilance was inspired by the noblest of motives. "Any loss or injury," she said, "would tend to involve the creditors in absolute ruin, and among them are an incredible number of the poor families of all sorts of artisans."†

She was seen, during her husband's trial, with her mother-in-law at the Arsenal gates, presenting petitions to the judges. When he was condemned,

* Cf. Eug. Grévy, *Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte*. Melun, 1861.

† Archives de la Bastille, Vol. II, p. 171 *et seq.*

she asked permission to rejoin in prison the husband who had betrayed and forsaken her in his hours of happiness. No sooner was this sad favour granted than she hastened to avail herself of it. Having consoled him in captivity, she closed his eyes in death. Left a widow, she followed the example set by many lonely ladies of rank in those days : she withdrew to a convent. For her retreat she chose the royal Abbey of Val-de-Grâce of Notre-Dame de la Crèche, which was on the left bank of the Seine, in the Rue Saint-Jacques. This Benedictine convent, as we know, owed its origin to a vow of Queen Anne,* who built it when she at length bore a King.† Thus the walls within which this lady retired to shelter her widowhood were a hymn of thanksgiving in stone, a monument of gratitude to God for His gift to France of the persecutor of Nicolas Foucquet. Did she not realize this ? Or did her piety forbid her to nourish any bitterness toward the enemies of her house ? There were, no doubt, old ties between her and the nuns of Val-de-Grâce. We must not imagine her, in her cell, living the life of a recluse. That would be to show but little knowledge of convents as they were in those days.‡ The nuns were the innkeepers of the period. Sumptuously

* Anne of Austria (trans.).

† Her son, Louis XIV (trans.).

‡ And are now in Austria, Germany and elsewhere.—Editor.

lodged in buildings dependent on the community, the ladies lived a quiet but still worldly life, keeping their own servants, paying and receiving visits. Such was Madame Foucquet's position at Val-de-Grâce. She devoted herself, it is true, to the practices of religion ; and we know, for example, that, having obtained the body of St. Liberatus, a martyr of the African Church, she had it borne in a procession, on the 27th of August, 1690, to the parish church of Saint-Jacques du Haut-Pas.*

She occupied a pavilion in the convent garden, where, in lieu of gold and silver plate, she kept a few pieces of furniture worthy of her rank. In the month of March, 1700, a royal edict ordered private persons to declare and to take to the Mint all furniture in which there was any gold or silver ; and Madame Foucquet, widow, declared to the commissioner of her district that she possessed " a camp bed adorned with cloth of gold and silver, with chairs to match, hangings of gold damask, single width, twenty chairs and a bedstead of wood inlaid with gold, a sofa of the same with six places, a tapestry bed and chairs trimmed with gold fringe, six small consoles, twelve little gilt stands, two small round tables, two other tables and a bureau partly

* *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art français*, note by M. Guiffrey, July, 1876, p. 38.

gilt, and a small bed upholstered with gold and silver lace."

Madame Foucquet survived her husband thirty-six years. She died in Paris in 1716 "in great piety," says Saint-Simon, "having withdrawn from the world, and having, during the whole of her life, constantly engaged in good works."*

Foucquet had an audacious soul. He was born to tempt fortune and to take Fate by storm. As early as 1655 he was cherishing the boldest designs.

Realizing that in proportion as he obliged the Cardinal the latter grew suspicious of him, since each service that he rendered was a secret of which he became the inconvenient guardian, the Superintendent resolved to place himself in such a position as would ensure him against the chance of disgrace. With this object he began to think of converting the port of Concarneau and the fortress of Ham, which belonged to his brother, into strong-

* Saint-Simon adds : " She was the widow of Nicolas Foucquet, famous for his misfortunes, who, after being Superintendent of Finance for eight years, paid for the millions which Cardinal Mazarin had taken, for the jealousy of MM. Le Tellier and Colbert, and for a slightly excessive gallantry and love of splendour, by thirty-four years' imprisonment at Pignerol, because that was the utmost that could be inflicted on him, despite all the influence of Ministers and the authority of the King."—*Mémoires du duc de Saint-Simon*, ed. Chéruel, Vol. XIV, p. 112.

holds, where his adherents might assemble in arms in case the Cardinal were to attempt to lay hands on him. He therefore drew up a detailed programme of the project, recommending his supporters to go for orders to the house of Madame de Plessis-Bellière. "She knows my true friends," he said, "and there may be among them those who would be ashamed not to take part in anything proposed by her on my behalf."

This lady, who was so much in Foucquet's confidence, was the widow of a lieutenant-general in the King's army. She had never refused Foucquet anything: but gallantry was by no means her first concern. It was even said that she saved herself the trouble of contributing in person to the Superintendent's pleasures and that she preferred gratifying them vicariously to satisfying them herself. She was a strong-minded woman, a great politician, even in that age of intrigue, ambitious and proud enough to do herself credit, as we shall see later, by her display of loyalty and devotion. Her part in Foucquet's project was, should occasion arise, in conjunction with the Governors of Ham and Concarneau, to provide those two fortresses with men and with victuals. The Marquis de Charost, Foucquet's son-in-law, was to defend himself in Calais, of which town he was the governor. The Governors of Amiens, Havre and Arras were to assume an

equally threatening attitude. As allies at Court the rebel Minister counted on M. de la Rochefoucauld, Marsillac, his son, and Bournonville ; in Parliament on MM. de Harlay, Maupeou, Miron and Chenut ; at sea, on Admiral de Neuchèse et Guinan. We may note, in passing, that he was mistaken in fully half of his supposed friends. He gave it to be understood that Spain might be appealed to. If his arrest were persisted in and his trial instituted, there would be civil war. A monstrous project, a chimerical conception which it was childish to write down, and which served only to make the ruin of its mad inventor doubly sure.

It was during this period of folly and splendour that Foucquet, with a magnificence hitherto unequalled, created the estate and château of Vaux-le-Vicomte, near Melun.

Of them and of all that concerns them we shall treat separately in a special chapter.

At the same time he continued to provide for his safety. In order to increase his security he bought, on the 5th September, 1658, the island and fortress of Belle-Isle for a sum of 1,300,000 livres, of which 400,000 were paid in cash.

Once the possessor of this fortress, Foucquet applied himself to placing it in a state of defence. Thither he despatched engineers to fortify the

citadel ; from Holland he bought ships and cannon. Modifying his plan of defence, he substituted Belle-Isle for Ham and Concarneau.

Belle-Isle was to him what her milk-pail was to Perrette. He dreamed of deriving more wealth from it than the whole of Holland from her ports. Madame de Motteville got wind of these chimerical hopes. "The friends of Foucquet," wrote this lady, "have said—and apparently they have told the truth—that the Superintendent, who was indeed capable, by virtue of his courage and his genius, of many great projects, had conceived that of building a town, the excellent harbour of which was to attract all the trade of the North, thereby depriving Amsterdam of these advantages, and rendering a great service to the King and the State."* Foucquet was at this time at the height of his power. In spite of his motto, he will not rise any higher, unless his constancy in misfortune may be taken to have raised him above himself, in which case he may be said to have grown greater in prison by the knowledge of the vanity of all that had previously attracted him.

But it is the man in his prosperous days, the friend of art and of literature, Foucquet the magnificent, and Foucquet the voluptuous, whom we are portraying here. No better description can be

* *Mémoires*. Collection Petitot, Vol. LX, p. 142.

given of him than to reproduce the portrait which Nanteuil executed from life.*

* It is the portrait which is reproduced at the beginning of the French edition, because it seems to us at once both the truest and the happiest picture of the extraordinary man who, both in letters and in art, inaugurated the century of Louis XIV. The head, three-quarter profile, is turned to the left. It is a medallion inscribed with the words: "Messire Nicolas Foucquet, chevalier, vicomte de Melun et de Vaux, Conseiller du Roy, Ministre d'État, Surintendant des Finances et Procureur général de Sa Majesté." Signed "R. Nanteuil ad vivum ping. et sculpebat, 1661." The style is at once soft and firm, the workmanship pure and finished, the rendering of the colours excellent. This engraving was executed after a drawing or a pastel which Nanteuil had done from life, and which is lost. This work, and the engraving which perpetuates it, seem to me to be the origin of a whole family of portraits, of which I will mention several.

(1) A shaded bust, on a piedouche, bearing Foucquet's arms. The arrangement is bad, the inscription:

Ne faut-il que l'on avouë
Qu'on trouve en luy tous ce qu'on espéroit.
C'est un surintendant tel que l'on désiroit.
Personne ne s'en plaint, tout le monde s'en louë.

Signed: "Van Schupper faciebat. P. de la Serre."

(2) The head in an oval border. Raised hangings which reveal a country scene, with dogs coursing. The inscription:

"Messire Nicolas Foucquet, chevalier, vicomte de Melun et de Vaux, Ministre d'État, Surintendant des finances de Sa Majesté et son procureur général au Parlement de Paris."

(3) A much damaged copy. The face is pale and elongated, the expression melancholy and sanctimonious. It is an oval medallion, 1654, without signature, Paris, chez Daret.

(4) The same, chez Louis Boissevin, in the Rue Saint-Jacques.

(5) The same, with this quatrain:

What do we see there? Large features, eager, charming eyes, in roomy orbits, the shining pupils of which gleam beneath their lids with an expression

Si sa fidélité parut incomparable
En conservant l'Estat,
Sa prudence aujourd'huy n'est pas moins admirable
D'en augmenter l'éclat.

(6) Medallion. The picture is much disfigured; the inscription:

Qu'il a de probité, de sçavoir et de zelle,
Qu'il paroît généreux, magnanime et prudent,
Que son esprit est fort, que son cœur est fidelle,
Toutes ces qualités l'on fait Surintendant.

(7) Medallion, with drapery. Very bad. Signature: "Baltazar Moncornet, excud."

(8) The same, with a frame of foliage, 1658.

(9) A small copy, reversed, executed after Foucquet's death, the date of which is indicated, 23rd March, 1680. It is old, hard, dark and damaged. Signature: "Nanteuil, pinxit, Gaillard, sculpt."

A portrait by Lebrun deserves honourable mention after that of Nanteuil. The features are practically the same as in the engraving by Eugène Reins; but the expression is not so keen, nor so cheerful. The head, three-quarter profile, is turned to the right. This picture is the original of the three following engravings:

(1) A large oval. Signature: "C. Lebrun pinx, F. Poilly sculpt." Inscription:

Illustrissimus vir Nicolaus Foucquet
Generalis in Supremo regii Ærarii
Præfectus: V. Comes Melodunensis, etc.

In a later copy, Foucquet's arms replace the Latin inscription.

(2) A spoiled and softened copy, very careless workmanship. Signature: "C. Mellan del. et F."

(3) An imitation. Foucquet, seated in a straight-backed arm-chair, with large wrought nail-heads, with a casket on the table beside him. He holds a pen in his right hand, and paper in his left. Inscription:

at once of shrewdness and of pleasure. A long, straight nose, rather thick, a full-lipped mouth beneath a fine moustache; finally, that smiling expression which he retained even during his trial. The face is pleasing, but there is something disquieting about it. The costume is rich; not that of a gallant knight, or of a great noble, but of a magistrate. A little cap, a broad collar, a dark robe; the dress of a lawyer, but of a magnificent lawyer; for over the robe is thrown a sort of dalmatic of Genoa velvet, with a large flowered pattern. What this portrait does not reproduce is the charm of the original. Foucquet possessed a sovereign grace; he knew how to please, to inspire affection. It is true

*Magna videt, majora latent; ecce aspicias artis
Clarum opus, et virtus clarior arte latet,
Umbra est et fulget, solem miraris in umbra
Quid sol ipse micat, cujus et umbra micat.*

Signature: "Ægid. Rousselet, sculpt., 1659."

(4) An imitation. Signature: "Larmessin, 1661."

Finally, I must mention a full-length portrait, which seems inspired by the foregoing. The Superintendent is standing, wearing a long robe; he holds in his right hand a small bag, in his left a paper. A raised curtain displays, on the right, a country scene, with a torrent, a rock and a fortified château. In the sky, Renown puts a trumpet to her mouth. In her left hand she holds another trumpet with a bannerette on which is written: "Quo non ascendet?" Inscription:

*A quel degré d'honneur ne peut-il pas monter
S'il s'élève toujours par son propre courage?
Son nom et sa vertu lui donnent l'avantage
De pouvoir tout prétendre et de tout mériter.*

that he possessed a key to all hearts—access to an inexhaustible treasury. He gave much, but it is true also that he gave wisely, and he was naturally the most generous of men.

Poets he succoured with a noble delicacy. Since it is true that he usurped the rights which were then attributed to the Sovereign, his master, by disposing of the public revenue as though it were his own, at least he made a royal use of the King's treasure by bestowing some of it on Corneille, on La Fontaine and on Molière. The rest was spent on buildings, furniture, tapestries and so forth ; and this, again, when all is said, was a royal habit, if regarded, as it should be, in the light of ancient institutions. If Foucquet cannot be justified—and how can he be, since there were poor in France in those days?—at least his conduct is explained, in some degree excused, by the institutions, and, above all, by the public morality of his period.

While his Château de Vaux was building, Foucquet lived at Saint-Mandé, in a house sumptuously surrounded by beautiful gardens. These gardens adjoined the park where Mazarin used to spend the summer. The financier had only to pass through a door when he wished to visit the Minister. The estate of Saint-Mandé consisted of two estates bought from Mme de Beauvais, Anne of Austria's first lady-in-waiting. Gradually, Foucquet acquired

more land and added wings to the main building, so that the whole construction cost at least 1,100,000 livres; and yet the finest part of it remained unexecuted.*

We may form some idea of the beautiful things which Foucquet had collected in this house by consulting the inventory preserved in the Archives, and published by M. Bonnaffé,† “ of the statues, busts, scabella, columns, tables and other works in marble and stone at Saint-Mandé.”

They include many antiques. Most of the modern pieces of sculpture are by Michel Anguier, who spent three years, 1655–58, at Saint-Mandé. There he executed the group of *La Charité* which has already been mentioned, and a *Hercules* six feet in height, as well as “ thirteen statues, life-size, copied from the most beautiful antiques of Rome, notably the *Laocoön*, *Hercules*, *Flora*, and *Juno* and *Jupiter*.” This we are told by Germain Brice.‡ He had seen them in a garden in the Rue Culture-Sainte-Catherine, where they were in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Germain Brice also tells us that in those days eight

* A summary of the inventory at Saint-Mandé: MS. of the Bibliothèque Nat. Manusc. Suppl. fr. 10958, cited by M. Edm. Bonnaffé, *Les Amateurs de l'ancienne France*.—Le Surintendant Foucquet, librairie de l'Art, 1882.

† Loc. cit., pp. 61 *et seq.*

‡ Description of the city of Paris, 1713, p. 60.

other statues, by the same sculptor, and also from Saint-Mandé, adorned the house of the Marquise de Louvois at Choisy. We learn further, from other sources, that one of the ceilings of Saint-Mandé was painted by Le Brun.*

Finally, the Abbé de Marolles speaks of the beautiful things which Foucquet had painted at Saint-Mandé, and the Latin inscriptions which were entrusted to Nicolas Gervaise, his physician. We may remark in this connection that Louis XIV, who in art did little more than continue Foucquet's undertakings, derived from the functions which the Superintendent demanded from this Nicolas Gervaise the idea of that little Academy, the Academy of Inscriptions and Medals, which he founded five or six years later.

But the most famous room in the house of which we are now speaking was the library, because the noblest room in any house is that in which books are lodged, and because La Fontaine and Corneille used to linger in the library of Saint-Mandé. It was there that the poets used to wait for the Superintendent. "Every one knows," said Corneille, "that this great Minister was no less the Superintendent of belles-lettres than of finance; that his house was as open to men of intellect as

* *Mémoires des Académiciens*, Vol. I, p. 21. Bonnaflé, loc. cit., p. 15.

to men of affairs, and that, whether in Paris or in the country, it is always in his library that one awaits those precious moments which he steals from his overwhelming occupations, in order to gratify those who possess some degree of talent for successful writing.”*

It was in this gallery that La Fontaine, as well as Corneille, used to sit waiting until the master of the house had leisure to receive the poet and his verses. One day he waited a whole hour. Monsieur le Surintendant was busy ; whether with finance or with love posterity cannot hope to know. Nevertheless, the good man found the time short : he passed it in his own company. Unfortunately, the *suisse* unceremoniously dismissed “ the lover of the Muses,” who, having returned home, wrote an epistle to assure his being received the next time. “ I will not be importunate,” he said :

Je prendrai votre heure et la mienne.
Si je vois qu'on vous entretienne,
J'attendrai fort paisiblement
En ce superbe appartement
Où l'on a fait d'étrange terre
Depuis peu venir à grand-erret
(Non sans travail et quelques frais)
Des rois Céphrim et Kiopès
Le cercueil, la tombe ou la bière :
Pour les rois, ils sont en poussière :

* Preface to *Œdipe*, *Collect. des grands écrivains*, Vol. VI, p. 103.

† With great pomp.

C'est là que j'en voulais venir.
 Il me fallut entretenir
 Avec les monuments antiques,
 Pendant qu'aux affaires publiques
 Vous donniez tout votre loisir.
 (Certes j'y pris un grand plaisir
 Vous semble-t-il pas que l'image
 D'un assez galant personnage
 Sert à ces tombeaux d'ornement).
 Pour vous en parler franchement,
 Je ne puis m'empêcher d'en rire.
 Messire Orus, me mis-je à dire,
 Vous nous rendez tous ébahis :
 Les enfants de votre pays
 Ont, ce me semble, des bavettes
 Que je trouve plaisamment faites.
 On m'eut expliqué tout cela,
 Mais il fallut partir de là
 Sans entendre l'allégorie.
 Je quittai donc la galerie,
 Fort content parmi mon chagrin,
 De Kiopès et de Céphrim,
 D'Orus et de tout son lignage,
 Et de maint autre personnage.
 Puissent ceux d'Égypte en ces lieux,
 Fussent-ils rois, fussent-ils dieux,
 Sans violence et sans contrainte,
 Se reposer dessus leur plinthe*
 Jusques au bout du genre humain !
 Ils ont fait assez de chemin
 Pour des personnes de leur taille.
 Et vous, seigneur, pour qui travaille
 Le temps qui peut tout consumer,
 Vous, que s'efforce de charmer
 L'Antiquité qu'on idolâtre,
 Pour qui le dieu de Cléopâtre

* The original edition has *plainte*.

Sous nos murs enfin abordé,
Vient de Memphis à Saint-Mandé :
Puissiez vous voir ces belles-choses
Pendant mille moissons de roses. . . *

At once absurd and charming is this song sung by a lark of Gaul to the sarcophagi of Africa. It is hardly necessary to say that the coffins, at the strange shape of which La Fontaine wondered, had never enclosed the bodies of "Kiopès and of Céphrim." Messire Orus had not told his secrets to the most lovable of our poets. We must not forget that the scholars of that time were as ignorant on this point as our friend.

These two mummy-cases were the first which had been brought to Paris from the banks of the Nile. They bore their history written upon them, but no one knew how to read it. The chance guess of some admirer had attributed to them a royal origin.†

The truth is that they had been discovered twenty-five years earlier in a pyramid by the inhabitants of the province of Saïd ; transported to Cairo, then to Alexandria, they were bought by a French trader, who landed them at Marseilles on the 4th September, 1632, where they were acquired,

* Œuvres complètes de La Fontaine, published by Ch. Marty-Laveaux, Vol. III (1866), p. 26 *et seq.*

† The inventory of the 26th February, 1666 (Bonnaffé, loc. cit., p. 61), classes them as follows : "Two antique mausoleums representing a king and queen of Egypt, 800 livres."

it is believed, by a collector of that town, M. Chemblon.*

At Rome at that time was a German Jesuit, by name Athanasius Kircher, a man of vivid imagination, very learned, who, having dabbled in physics, chemistry, natural history, theology, antiquities, music, ancient and modern languages, invented the magic lantern. This reverend Father really knew Coptic, and thought he knew something of the language of the ancient Egyptians. To prove this he wrote a large quarto volume entitled *Lingua Ægyptiaca restituta*, which proves quite the contrary. But it is very easy to deceive oneself, especially when one is a scholar. A brother of his in Jesus, Father Brusset, told him of the arrival of the two ancient coffins, and Father Kircher went to Marseilles to see them. Later he treated of them in his *Œdipus Ægyptiacus*, a pleasant day-dream in

* At least, this is the hypothesis propounded by M. Bonnaffé. It is founded on the fact that an anonymous document of 1648, published in *Les Collectionneurs de l'ancienne France* (Aubry, ed. 1873), mentions le sieur Chemblon, of Marseilles, as a professor "of Egyptian idols to enclose mummies." But it seems as if the anonymous document referred not to sarcophagi of marble or basalt, but rather to those boxes of painted and gilt pasteboard, with human faces, which abound in the necropolises of ancient Egypt. The port of Marseilles must at that time have received a fairly large number of such. We must remember that the mummy was in those days considered as a remedy, and was widely sold by druggists.

four folio volumes; La Fontaine's, in the Saint-Mandé library, was at least shorter.

About the year 1659, the sarcophagi were bought for Foucquet, and taken to the Superintendent's house. When La Fontaine saw them they no longer contained the bodies which Egyptian piety had destined them to preserve. The two mummies had been unceremoniously relegated to an outhouse.

As for the sarcophagi themselves, Foucquet had intended to send them to his house at Vaux. He had conceived the charming idea of restoring them from the land of exile to the pyramid from which they had been taken.* But his days of prosperity were numbered. This project was to be swept away like a drop of water in the great shipwreck. The two sarcophagi, seized at Saint-Mandé, where they had remained, were valued on the 26th of February, 1656, at 800 livres, and were classified as "two ancient mausoleums, representing a king and queen."†

A sculptor, whose name remains unknown, bought them at the public sale which followed Foucquet's condemnation. He then gave them to Le Nôtre. Le Nôtre, having passed from the service of Foucquet into that of the King, was then

* Cf. Mlle de Scudéry, *Clélie*. "Méléandre (Lebrun) had caused to be built, on a small, somewhat uneven plot of ground, two little pyramids in imitation of those which are near Memphis."

† See note, p. 10.

living in a little pavilion at the Tuileries, into which the two mausoleums, as the inventory calls them, could not enter. They were therefore highly inconvenient guests. They were placed "in a little garden of the Tuileries, where these rare curiosities remained for a long time exposed to the injurious effect of the atmosphere and greatly neglected."*

Finding that he had no use for them, Le Nôtre presented them to a neighbour and friend, M. d'Ussé, Comptroller of the King's Household, whose garden adjoined that of the Tuileries. M. d'Ussé had them placed "at the end of a pleached alley." According to the virtuoso, Germain Brice, the Comptroller, did not realize their value and their rarity. A Flora or a Pomona, smiling on her marble pedestal, would have been more to his liking. Nevertheless, he had them taken to his estate of Ussé, in Touraine, which shows that he did not disdain them. Thus the repose which La Fontaine desired for these worshippers of Messire Orus was denied them. Even yet they had not made their last journey. M. d'Ussé had married a child of twelve, who was the daughter of a great man. Her name was Jeanne-Françoise de Vauban. Her father, then Commissary-General of Fortifications, paid a visit of some length to his

* Description of the city of Paris, by Germain Brice, ed. of 1698, Vol. I, p. 124 *et seq.*

son-in-law. He could not resist the temptation to dig, and so he made a terrace; at the foot of this terrace he constructed a niche for the two "mausoleums." Now, half a century later, there lived at a distance of five miles from Ussé an antiquarian called La Sauvagère, who went up and down the country examining ancient stones, for stones had voices before our day. He did not fail to go to Ussé. He saw the sarcophagi, and marvelled at them. He wrote about them to Court de Géblin, who replied to his letter. Court de Géblin was investigating the origin of the world. This time he thought he had found it.

La Sauvagère published plates of the sarcophagi and of the hieroglyphics which covered them.* Here was a fine subject for conjecture. After thirty years, La Sauvagère's enthusiasm had not cooled. To the Prince de Montbazou, who had just bought the château, and the Egyptians with it, he exclaimed fervently: "Prince, there you have something which is in itself worth the whole of your estate."

In 1807, the Egyptians were still in the niche where Vauban had installed them. The Marquis de Chalabre then sold the estate of Ussé, which he had inherited from his father, but he kept the sarcophagi and put them in his rooms at Paris.

* *Recueil d'antiquités dans les Gaules*, by La Sauvagère, Paris, 1770, p. 329 *et seq.*

Then they disappeared, and, in 1843, no one knew what had become of them. That year M. Bonardot, the archæologist, who took such pains to preserve old engravings, visited the cemetery of the old Abbey of Longchamps. By the edge of a path he discovered two stones sticking out of the ground. Having poked about with his stick, he saw that these stones were in the form of heads, and by the dressing of the hair he recognized two Egyptians. He made inquiries, and learned that they were the two sarcophagi, sent there by M. de Chalabre's son, and forgotten. M. de Chalabre was then dying; his heirs had the Egyptians disinterred and gave them to the Louvre Museum, and there they are to-day.* Their names have been deciphered. They are not royal names. One is called Hor-Kheb, the other Ank-Mer.†

They wear their beards in beard-cases, according to the custom of their time and country, and it was these beard-cases that La Fontaine took for bibs.

The gallery of Saint-Mandé, which contained these two monuments that we have followed so far afield, was magnificently decorated with thirteen ancient gods in marble, life-size, and thirty-three busts in bronze or marble, placed on pedestals. Among these busts were those of Socrates and

* D.5.D. 7³.

† In this story, I have followed M. Bonnaffé. Loc. cit., p. 57.

Seneca. Imagine these faces, brown or luminous, ranged about the chamber, where the books glowed sombrely in the splendour of brown and gilt. Imagine the pictures, the cabinets of medals, the tables of porphyry, the mosaics; imagine a thousand precious curiosities, and you will have some idea of this gallery, the rich treasures of which were to be dispersed almost as soon as they had been collected.

The Superintendent had little time for reading, but he loved to turn over the pages of his books, for he was a well-read man. He promised himself the pleasures of learned, leisurely study in his old age, when he would no longer read a welcome in ladies' eyes. Meanwhile, he had had twenty-seven thousand volumes arranged on the shelves of his gallery, around those two sarcophagi the story of which has carried us so far from Saint-Mandé and the last days of Mazarin. These twenty-seven thousand volumes comprised seven thousand in folio, twelve thousand in quarto and eight thousand in octavo. They were not all in the gallery. There was, in particular, a room for the "Alcorans, the Talmuds and some old Bible commentaries."*

The rich collection of printed books which he had

* Inventory and valuation of the books found at Saint-Mandé on the 30th July, 1665. *Biblio. Nat. MSS.*, p. 9438. The whole was valued at 38,544 livres.

gathered together embraced universal history, medicine, law, natural history, mathematics, oratory, theology and philosophy, as well as the fine arts, represented by illustrated volumes.

These books, of which it would not be possible to compile a catalogue to-day, were not, it would seem, contained in beautiful morocco bindings, finely gilt and richly adorned with coats of arms, like those which honoured Mazarin's library. The financier had bought hastily, in a wholesale fashion, books already bound, so that we cannot rank him among the great bibliophiles, although he may be numbered among the lovers of books.

That Foucquet loved books, as he loved gardens, as he loved everything flattering to the taste of a gentleman, that he even preferred books to anything else, there is no doubt, for we have irrefutable testimony of the fact. In the *Conseils de la Sagesse*, which he wrote in prison, may be found this beautiful phrase: "You know that formerly I used to find consolation in my books."*

Alas, why did he not oftener listen to those consolers which speak so gently and so softly, and which can bestow every blessing upon the heart that is innocent of desire? *In angello cum libello*. Therein, perhaps, resides all wisdom. But, if every one sat in his corner and read, what would books be about?

* *Conseils de la Sagesse*, p. x.

They are filled with the sorrows and the errors of men, and it is by saddening us that they give us consolation. Yes, there was in Foucquet the stuff of a librarian in the great style of a Peiresc or a Naudé. But this stuff was but a fragment of the whole piece. Cæsar, also, would have been the first book-lover of his day if he had not been eager to conquer and to reign, if he had not possessed a genius for organizing Rome and the world. One needs a childlike candour and a pious zeal if one would shut oneself up with the dust of old books, with the souls of the dead. The modest librarian who holds this pen, for his own part, savours with delight this reposeful charm, but he knows well that if the charm be pure it is that it has been bought at the price of renunciation and resignation.

A word as to what became of Foucquet's library. But let the reader not be alarmed ; the fate of the twenty-seven thousand volumes which composed it will not occupy us so long as that of the two Egyptian sarcophagi. This library was sold by auction, like the rest of the Superintendent's movables. Guy Patin wrote from Paris on the 25th February, 1665 : " M. Foucquet's effects are about to be sold. There is a fine library. It is said that M. Colbert wants it." Perhaps Colbert did want it, but for the King. Colbert was not a second Foucquet.

Carcasi, the keeper of the Royal Library, bought for the King about thirteen thousand volumes. The accounts of the King's buildings mention, under the date of January, 1667, the payment of six thousand livres "to the Sieur Mandat, liquidator of the assets of M. Foucquet, the price of books from the Library of Saint-Mandé purchased for and by the command of the King." And another payment of fourteen thousand livres "to the Sieur Arnoul for books on the History of Italy, which His Majesty has also bought."

As for the manuscripts, they were bought by various libraries and dispersed. The catalogue which the purchasers compiled of these manuscripts forms a small duodecimo volume of sixty-two pages, entitled : *Mémoires des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque de M. Foucquet, qui se vendent à Paris, chez Denis Thierry, Frédéric Léonard, Jean Dupuis, rue Saint-Jacques, et Claude Barbin, au Palais. M. D. C. LXVII.*

So much for the house ; now for the guests. We have already met La Fontaine and Corneille in the gallery. We shall see them there again ; they are assiduous visitors. Old Corneille comes there with his grievances. Poor, half forgotten, he was then labouring under the blow of the failure of his *Pertharite*. His great genius was wearing out, was becoming harsh and uncouth, and poor Pertharite,

King of the Lombards, who was too fond of his wife Rodelinde, had met with a bad reception. Corneille, who was slow to take a hint, for acuteness is not a characteristic of men of his temperament, nevertheless understood that the hour of retreat had sounded. With a vestige of pride, which became his genius, he represented as voluntary a retirement which was forced upon him. "It is better," he said, "that I should withdraw on my own account than wait until I am flatly told to do so ; and it is just that after twenty years' work I should begin to see that I am growing too old to continue to be the vogue. At any rate, I have this satisfaction : that I leave the French stage better than I found it, with regard both to art and to morals."

A touching and a noble farewell, but a painful one. Foucquet recalled him ; a kind word and a small pension sufficed to cheer the old man's heart, to console him for long neglect, and for the languishing of his fame. He presented his new benefactor with an epistle full of gratitude :

Oui, généreux appui de tout notre Parnasse,
Tu me rends ma vigueur lorsque tu me fais grâce,
Et je veux bien apprendre à tout notre avenir
Que tes regards bénins ont su me rajeunir.

.
Je sens le même feu, je sens la même audace
Qui fit plaindre le Cid, qui fit combattre Horace,

Et je me trouve encor la main qui crayonna
 L'âme du grand Pompée et l'esprit de Cinna.
 Choisis-moi seulement quelque nom dans l'histoire
 Pour qui tu veuilles place au Temple de la Gloire,
 Quelque nom favori qu'il te plaise arracher
 A la nuit de la tombe, aux cendres du bûcher.
 Soit qu'il faille ternir ceux d'Énée et d'Achille
 Par un noble attentat sur Homère et Virgile,
 Soit qu'il faille obscurcir par un dernier effort
 Ceux que j'ai sur la scène affranchis de la mort ;
 Tu me verras le même, et je te ferai dire,
 Si jamais pleinement ta grande âme m'inspire,
 Que dix lustres et plus n'ont pas tout emporté,
 Cet assemblage heureux de force et de clarté,
 Ces prestiges secrets de l'aimable imposture,
 Qu'à l'envie m'ont prêtés et l'art et la nature.
 N'attends pas toutefois que j'ose m'enhardir,
 Ou jusqu'à te dépeindre ou jusqu'à t'applaudir,
 Ce serait présumer que d'une seule vue
 J'aurais vu de ton cœur la plus vaste étendue,
 Qu'un moment suffirait à mes débiles yeux
 Pour démêler en toi ces dons brillants des cieux,
 De qui l'inépuisable et perçante lumière,
 Sitôt que tu parais, fait baisser la paupière.
 J'ai déjà vu beaucoup en ce moment heureux,
 Je t'ai vu magnanime, affable, généreux,
 Et ce qu'on voit à peine après dix ans d'excuses,
 Je t'ai vu tout à coup libéral pour les Muses.*

This, after all, is little more than a receipt expressed in Spanish style. None the less, the poet promises the financier that he will treat any subject which the financier indicates. Foucquet gave him

* Lines presented to Monseigneur le procureur général Foucquet, Superintendent of Finance, at the opening of the tragedy of *Œdipe*, 1659.

three subjects to choose from. *Œdipe* was one of the three ; the one that Corneille chose. He handled it, and we may say he handled it gallantly. His heroes were marvellously polite. It is charming to hear Theseus, Prince of Athens, saying to the beautiful Dirce :

Quelque ravage affreux qu'étale ici la peste,
L'absence aux vrais amants est encor plus funeste.

Old Corneille, pleased with himself for having conceived such beautiful things, fondly believed *Œdipe* to be his masterpiece, although it had taken him only two months to write ; he had made haste in order to please the Superintendent. This work, which was, after all, from the pen of the great Corneille, was favourably received and had a great vogue. Evidence of this may be found in the execrable verses of the gazetteer Loret a poet who had to write so much a week :

Monsieur de Corneille l'aîné,
Depuis peu de temps a donné
A ceux de l'hôtel de Bourgogne*
Son dernier ouvrage ou besogne,
Ouvrage grand et signalé,
Qui l'*Œdipe* est intitulé,
Ouvrage, dis-je, dramatique,
Mais si tendre et si pathétique,
Que, sans se sentir émouvoir,
On ne peut l'entendre ou le voir.

* One of the earliest French theatres. It was founded by the Confrères de la Passion in 1548.—*Trans.*

Jamais pièce de cette sorte
 N'eut l'élocution si forte ;
 Jamais, dit-on, dans l'univers,
 On n'entendit de si beaux vers.

We mentioned that Foucquet, when proposing to Corneille the theme of *Œdipe*, suggested two others, one of which was *Camma*. What the third was we do not know.* *Camma*, who slays her husband's murderer upon the altar to which he has led her, is no commonplace heroine. Corneille was a good kinsman ; he passed on *Camma* to his brother Thomas, an excellent person, who made a pretty dull tragedy out of it, as we should expect. Thomas also benefited from the Superintendent's generosity. He dedicated to Foucquet his tragedy *La Mort de Commode*, in return for the "generous marks of esteem" and the benefits which he had received. He said, with charming politeness, "I wished to offer myself, but you have singled me out."

Pellisson, a brilliant wit and a capable man, became, after 1656, one of Foucquet's principal clerks. His fine affection for Mademoiselle de Scudéry he so elaborately embroidered that it appears to-day nothing more or less than a miraculous piece of artifice. It was marvellously decked out and embellished ; an exquisite work of art. Had they both been good looking, they would not

* Cf. *La Vie de Corneille*, by Fontenelle.

have introduced so many complications into their liaison; they would have loved each other naturally. But he was ugly, so was she, and as one must love in this world—everybody says so—they loved each other with what they had, with their pretty wit and their subtlety. Being able to do no better, they created a masterpiece.

Pellisson was an assiduous guest at the Saturdays of this learned and “precious” spinster. There he met Madame du Plessis-Bellière, whose friendship for Foucquet is well known to us. Witty herself, she was naturally inclined to favour wit in the new Sappho, who was then publishing *Clélie* in ten volumes, and in Pellisson, her relations with whom were as pleasant as they were discreet. She introduced them both to the Superintendent, who lost no time in attaching them both to himself so as not to separate these two incomparable lovers. Pellisson paid Mademoiselle de Scudéry’s debt by writing a *Remerciement du siècle à M. le surintendant Foucquet*, and presently on his own account he fabricated a second *Remerciement*, full of those elaborate allegories which people revelled in at that time, but which to-day would send us to sleep, standing.

Pellisson, having become the Superintendent’s steward, bargained with his tax-farmers and corrected his master’s love-letters, for he was a resourceful person; and, as he piqued himself especially on

his wit, he obligingly served as Foucquet's intermediary with men of letters. On his recommendation the Superintendent gave a receipt for the taxes of Forez to the poet Jean Hesnault, and enabled the poet to end at Saint-Mandé the poverty which he had so long paraded up and down the world, in the Low Countries, in England and in Sicily. Jean Hesnault was an intelligent person, but untrustworthy: "Loving pleasure with refinement," says Bayle, "delicately and artistically debauched."

A pupil of Gassendi, like Molière, Bernir and Cyrano, he was an atheist, and did not conceal the fact. For the rest, he was a good poet and high minded. Was it his audacious, profound and melancholy philosophy which recommended him to the Superintendent's favour? Hardly. Foucquet in his times of good fortune was far too much occupied with the affairs of this world to be greatly interested in those of another. And when misfortune brought him leisure, he is said to have sought consolation in piety. However that may be, the kindness which he showed to Jean Hesnault was not bestowed upon an ungrateful recipient. Hesnault, as we shall see, appeared among the most ardent defenders of the Superintendent in the days of his misfortune. Foucquet also counted among his pensioners a man as pious as Hesnault was the

reverse. I refer to Guillaume de Brébeuf, a Norman nobleman, who translated the *Pharsale*, who was extremely zealous in converting the Calvinists of his province. He was always shivering with fever; but his greatest misfortune was his poverty. Cardinal Mazarin had made him many promises; it was Foucquet who kept them.

He also helped Boisrobert, who was growing old. Now, old age, which is never welcome to anybody, is most unwelcome to buffoons. This poetical Abbé, whom Richelieu described as "the ardent solicitor of the unwilling Muses," had long been accustomed to ask, to receive and to thank. Compliments cost him nothing, and he stuffed his collected *Épîtres en vers*, published in 1659, with eulogies, in which Foucquet is compared to the heroes, the gods and the stars. Gombault, who wrote in a more concise style, and was a shepherd on Parnassus, dedicated his *Danaïdes* to him, by way of expressing his thanks. Before 1658 this poet of the Hôtel de Rambouillet had experienced the financier's generosity. As for poor Scarron, he was in an unfortunate position. He, unhappy man, had taken part in the Fronde. He had decried Jules, and Jules, not generally vindictive, was not forgiving in this case, where to forgive was to pay. Foucquet treated the Frondeur as a beggar, and then, repenting, gave him a pension of 1600 livres. Nevertheless, he remained indigent

and needy. His creditors often hammered the knocker violently on his iron-clamped door, making a terrible noise in the street. Once the poet was blockaded by certain nasty-looking fellows. Three thousand francs, which Foucquet sent through the excellent Pellisson, came just in the nick of time to deliver him from prison. Madame Scarron was in the good books of Madame la Surintendante. From Foucquet she obtained for her husband the right to organize a company of unloaders at the city gates. The waggoners, doubtless, would have been just as well pleased to do without these unloaders, who made them pay through the nose, but the crippled poet who directed them received by this means a revenue of between two and three thousand livres.

I forgot Loret ; the worst of men, because the worst of rhymers, and there is nothing in the world worse than a bad poet. Yet every one must live—at least, so they say—and Loret lived, thanks to Foucquet. He received his pittance on condition that he would be moderate in his praises. Foucquet was a man of taste ; he feared tactless eulogy, a fear which we can hardly appreciate to-day. Nevertheless, in spite of these remonstrances, Loret could not arrest his flattering pen. It was after having celebrated Foucquet as a demigod in very bad verses that he added :

J'en pourrais dire davantage,
Mais à ce charmant personnage
Les éloges ne plaisent pas ;
Les siens sont pour lui sans appas.
Il aime peu qu'on le loue,
Et touchant ce sujet, j'avoue
Que l'excellent sieur Pellisson
M'a fait plusieurs fois la leçon ;
Mais, comme son rare mérite
Tout mon cœur puissamment excite
Et que ce sujet m'est très cher,
J'aurais peine à m'en empêcher.

But enough of this gazetteer, who, after all, was not a bad fellow, although he never wrote anything but foolishness, and let us come to the poet whose delightful genius even to-day sheds a glory over the memory of Nicolas Foucquet.

La Fontaine was presented to Foucquet by his uncle, Jannart, in the course of the year 1654. He was then absolutely unknown outside his town of Château-Thierry, where he was said to have courted a certain Abbess, and to have been seen at night hastening over a frosty road, with a dark lantern in his hand and white stockings on his feet. That was his only fame. If he was then occupied with poetry, it was for himself alone, and to the knowledge, perhaps, of only a few friends.

Jacques Jannart, his uncle, or, to be more precise, the husband of the aunt of La Fontaine's wife, was King's Counsellor and Deputy Attorney-General in the Paris Parliament. He was a great personage and

a good man. He was not displeased that his nephew should be a poet, should commit follies and should borrow money. He himself was not innocent of gallantry, and was inclined to interpret the law in favour of fair ladies. He thought that La Fontaine's poetry would please the Superintendent and that the Superintendent's patronage would please the poet.

Foucquet had good taste ; La Fontaine pleased him ; indeed, he has the merit of having been the first to appreciate the poet. He gave him a pension of one thousand francs on condition that he should produce a poem once a quarter. What the date of this gift is I do not know ; the poet's receipts do not go further back than 1659, if Mathieu Marais* was correct in attributing to this same year a poem which precedes the receipts, and which the poet published in 1675† with this description :

As M. [Foucquet] had said that I ought to give him something in return for his endeavour to make my verses known, I soon afterwards sent this letter to [Madame Foucquet].‡

* *Histoire de la Vie et des Ouvrages de La Fontaine*, by Mathieu Marais, 1811, p. 125.

† *Ouvrages de prose et de poésie des sieurs de Maucroix et La Fontaine*, Vol. I, p. 99.

‡ There are two blank spaces in the 1685 edition. I have filled them with the two names in brackets. For the first I have put the name of Foucquet, which is given in the *Œuvres diverses*

In this poem he jokes about the engagement which he had entered into with the Superintendent for the receipt of his pension :

Je vous l'avoue, et c'est la vérité,
Que Monseigneur n'a que trop mérité
La pension qu'il veut que je lui donne.
En bonne foi je ne sache personne
A qui Phébus s'engageât aujourd'hui
De la donner plus volontiers qu'à lui.

.

Pour acquitter celle-ci chaque année,
Il me faudra quatre termes égaux ;
A la Saint-Jean je promets madrigaux,
Courts et troussés et de taille mignonne ;
Longue lecture en été n'est pas bonne.
Le chef d'octobre aura son tour après,
Ma Muse alors prétend se mettre en frais.
Notre héros, si le beau temps ne change,
De menus vers aura pleine vendange.
Ne dites point que c'est menu présent,
Car menus vers sont en vogue à présent.
Vienne l'an neuf, ballade est destinée ;
Qui rit ce jour, il rit toute l'année.

.

Pâques, jour saint, veut autre poésie ;
J'envoyerais lors, si Dieu me prête vie,
Pour achever toute la pension,
Quelque sonnet plein de dévotion.
Ce terme-là pourrait être le pire.
On me voit peu sur tels sujets écrire,
Mais tout au moins je serai diligent,
Et, si j'y manque, envoyez un sergent,

(Vol. I, p. 19). To fill the second space I have followed the suggestion of Mathieu Marais. Walkenaer has Pellisson, which is out of the question.

Faites saisir sans aucune remise
 Stances, rondeaux et vers de toute guise.
 Ce sont nos biens : les doctes nourrissons !
 N'amassent rien, si ce n'est des chansons.*

This engagement was kept, with certain modifications, for a year at least. The poet's acknowledgments were in a graceful and natural style, unequalled since the time of Marot. The ballad for the midsummer quarter was sent to Madame la Surintendante :

Reine des cœurs, objet délicieux,
 Que suit l'enfant qu'on adore en des lieux
 Nommés Paphos, Amathonte et Cythère,
 Vous qui charmez les hommes et les dieux,
 En puissiez-vous dans cent ans autant faire.

We have seen Madame Foucquet as Charity ; we now see her as Venus. But it was only to poets that she was a goddess ; in reality she was a good woman whose mental qualities lacked charm, who was only attractive in misfortune.

In this poem, La Fontaine asks Madame Foucquet whether "one of the Smiles" whom she "has for secretary" will send him a glorious acquittal. Now, the Smile who was Madame la Surintendante's secretary was Pellisson. He was a wit, as we have said. It delighted him to think himself a Smile hovering round the Venus of Vaux. As for the acquittal he was asked for, he composed two,

* Edit. Marty-Laveaux, Vol. V, pp. 15-17.

one in his own name, and the other in that of his divine Surintendante. Here is the first, which is called the Public Acquittal :

Par devant moi sur Parnasse notaire,
Se présenta la reine des beautés,
Et des vertus le parfait exemplaire,
Qui lut ces vers, puis les ayant comptés,
Pesés, revus, approuvés et vantés,
Pour le passé voulut s'en satisfaire, |
Se réservant le tribut ordinaire,
Pour l'avenir aux termes arrêtés.
Muses de Vaux et vous, leur secrétaire,
Voilà l'acquit tel que vous souhaitez.
En puissiez-vous dans cent ans autant faire.

Here is the second, under private seal, in the name of the Surintendante :

De mes deux yeux, ou de mes deux soleils
J'ai lu vos vers qu'on trouve sans pareils,
Et qui n'ont rien qui ne me doive plaire.
Je vous tiens quitte et promets vous fournir
De quoi par tout vous le faire tenir,
Pour le passé, mais non pour l'avenir.
En puissiez-vous dans cent ans autant faire.*

* No one can answer for the correctness of the text of these two poems. Chardon de La Rochette published them from memory in 1811 (*Histoire de la Vie et des Ouvrages de La Fontaine*, by Mathieu Marais, p. 125). He had possessed the two acquittals in Pellisson's own hand-writing, but had not kept them, because, he said, he did not think "they were worth it." This sagacious Hellenist set little store by a Pellisson autograph, in comparison with the Palatine MS. of the *Anthologia*. And he was right. But it is odd that he should have known the verses by heart, and that, having neglected to preserve them in his desk, he should have retained them in his memory.

But Jean could not live by rule. As he himself ingenuously admits, he divided his life into two parts: one he passed in sleeping, the other in doing nothing. For writing verse was doing nothing for him, it came to him so naturally. But he could not do it if he were obliged. In October, the second quarter, when his second receipt fell due, we find the poet very much embarrassed. He sends a poem, the refrain of which betrays this embarrassment:

To promise is one thing, to keep one's promise is another.*

In the first quarter of 1660, all he produced was a dizaine for Madame Foucquet. Foucquet, not unnaturally, mildly objected; and the poet replied:

Bien vous dirai qu'au nombre s'arrêter
N'est pas le mieux, seigneur. . . .

Foucquet was content and did not trouble his poetic debtor any further. The latter thought that he would pay his debt by a descriptive poem of some length, but this poem, *Le Songe de Vaux*, was never finished. The terrible awakening was near at hand.

We have already seen La Fontaine in the gallery at Saint-Mandé. Whilst he was waiting Foucquet was busy, whether with an affair of State or of the heart is doubtful, for he burnt the candle at both ends. "He took everything upon himself," says the

* Promettre est un, et tenir est un autre.

Abbé de Choisy, " he aspired to be the first Minister, without losing a single moment of his pleasures. He would pretend to be working alone in his study at Saint-Mandé ; and the whole Court, anticipating his future greatness, would wait in his antechamber, loudly praising the indefatigable industry of this great man, while he himself would go down the private staircase into a garden, where his nymphs, whose names I might mention if I chose, and they were not among the least distinguished, awaited him, and for no small reward.* He would send sometimes three, sometimes four thousand pistoles to the ladies of his heart,† and some of the most charming sought to please him.‡

Would it be true, however, to say with Nicolas :

Never did a Superintendent meet with a cruel lady.§

Madame de Sévigné was wooed by Foucquet, and yet she had no difficulty in escaping from him. She made him understand that she would give nothing and accept nothing. She was reasonable ; he became so. " Reduced to friendship, he transformed his love," says Bussy, " into an esteem for a virtue hitherto unknown to him."|| Madame de Sévigné was not the only obdurate one.

* *Mémoires de Choisy*, coll. Petitot, p. 211.

† *Ibid.*, loc. cit., p. 230.

‡ Bussy, II, p. 50.

§ " Jamais surintendant ne trouva de cruelle."

|| Bussy, II, p. 50.

Madame Scarron, beautiful and prudish, found a way to obtain great benefits from Foucquet without involving her reputation. When the Superintendent granted her a favour, it was Madame Foucquet whom she thanked. Thus, for the privilege which we have mentioned: "Madame," she writes to Madame la Surintendante, "I will not trouble you further about the matter of the unloaders. It is happily terminated through the intervention of that hero to whom we all owe everything, and whom you have the pleasure of loving. The provost of the merchants listened to reason as soon as he heard the great name of M. Foucquet. I entreat of you, Madame, to allow me to come and thank you at Vaux. Madame de Vassé has assured me that you continue to regard me kindly, and that you will not consider me an intruder in those groves, where one may reflect with so much reason, and jest with so much grace."*

Madame Foucquet, who was a kind woman, wished to keep Madame Scarron about her; but the cunning fly would not allow itself to be caught. She wrote to her indiscreet benefactress: "Madame, my obligation to you did not permit me to hesitate concerning the proposition which Madame Bonneau made me on your behalf. It was so flattering to me, I am so disgusted with my present

* Letter of the 25th M y, 1658

circumstances, and I have so much respect for you, that I should not have wavered for a moment, even if the gratitude which I owe you had not influenced me ; but, Madame, M. Scarron, although your indebted and very humble servant, cannot give his consent. My entreaties have failed to move him, my reasons to persuade him. He implores you to love me less, or at any rate to display your affection in a way which would be less costly to him. Read his request, Madame, and pardon the ardour of a husband who has no other weapon against tedium, no other consolation in all his misfortunes than the wife whom he loves. I told Madame Bonneau that if you shorten the term I might, perhaps, obtain his consent, but I see that it is useless thus to flatter myself, and that I had too far presumed upon my power. I entreat of you, Madame, to continue your kindness towards me. No one is more attached to you than I am, and my gratitude will cease only with my life.*

Mademoiselle du Fouilloux was no prude ; quite the contrary. She arrived at Court in 1652 ; she appeared and she pleased.

Une fleur fraîche et printanière,
Un nouvel astre, une lumière,
Savoir l'aimable du Fouilloux,
Dont plusieurs beaux yeux sont jaloux,

* Letter of 18th January, 1660.

D'autant que cette demoiselle
Est charmante, brillante et belle,
Ayant pour escorte l'Amour,
A fait son entrée à la Cour
Et pris le nom, cette semaine,
De fille d'honneur de la reine.*

She figured in all the ballets in which the King danced, and Loret sings that in 1658 :

Fouilloux, l'une des trois pucelles,
Comme elle est belle entre les belles,
Par ses attraits toujours vainqueurs,
Y faisait des rafles de cœurs.

Foucquet lost his heart to her. He spoke ; he gained a hearing. Mademoiselle du Fouilloux, frivolous and calculating, was doubly made for him. Their liaison was intimate and political. Fouilloux was absolutely self-interested ; she did not ask for what was her due, being too great a lady for that, but she demanded it by means of a third person, and even insisted upon advances. " I will tell you," wrote this go-between,† " that I have found Fouilloux prepared to entreat me to find a way to inform you, as if on my own account, that I knew you would please her if you would advance one hundred pistoles on this year's pension."

We know also, from the same source, that the beauty asked for money to pay her debts, and did not pay them. Here is the end of the note :

* Loret, *Muse historique*, letter of the 28th of December, 1652.

† In 1661 (?) *Papiers de Foucquet* (F. Baluze), Vol. I, pp. 31-32.

“Mademoiselle du Fouilloux has assured me that, of all the money that you have given her, she has not paid a halfpenny. She has gambled it all away.” We must do justice to Foucquet, and to Fouilloux; they were very reasonable. Fouilloux’s one thought was to have her own establishment, and she had her eye on an honest man, something of a simpleton, but of good family, whom she had had watched by the Superintendent’s police.

In those days the Queen’s ladies-in-waiting were flattered in song. Fouilloux had verses addressed to her :

Fouilloux sans songer à plaire
Plait pourtant infiniment
Par un air libre et charmant.
C’est un dessein téméraire
Que d’attaquer sa rigueur.
Si j’eusse été sans affaires
La belle aurait eu mon cœur.*

Other verses celebrate Menneville :

Toute la Cour est éprise
De ces attraits glorieux
Dont vous enchantez les yeux,
Menneville ; ma franchise
S’y devrait bien engager ;
Mais mon cœur est place prise
Et vous n’y sauriez loger.

This Menneville, celebrated in such bad verse, was, with Fouilloux, the prettiest woman at Court.

* Maurepas Collection. Vol. II, p. 271.

On this matter we have the testimony of Jean Racine, who, banished to the depths of the provinces, wrote to his friend La Fontaine, citing Fouilloux and Menneville as examples of beauty. "I cannot refrain from saying a word as to the beauties of this province. . . . There is not a village maiden, not a cobbler's wife, who might not vie in beauty with the Fouilloux and the Mennevilles. . . . All the women here are dazzling, and they deck themselves out in a manner which is to them the most natural fashion in the world, and as for the attractions of their person,

Colors verus, corpus solidum et succi plenum." *

Of the two, Menneville is thought to have been the more beautiful. A song about her runs :

Cachez-vous, filles de la reine,
Petites,
Car Menneville est de retour,
M'amour.

She sold herself to the Superintendent. As she did not equal Fouilloux in her genius for intrigue, Foucquet used her more kindly. While this lady-in-waiting was yielding to the suit of the seigneur of Vaux, she was trying to force the Duc de Damville to marry her, as he had promised. Like Fouilloux, she begged the Superintendent to help her to get settled. He did so with a good grace, and

* Letter of the 11th November, 1661.

sent the fair lady fifteen thousand crowns, which ought to have decided Damville. The latter hesitated. An accident decided for him : he died.

There were no pleasures, no distractions—if we employ the word in the strict sense which Pascal then gave it—there were no means of enjoyment and oblivion for which Foucquet had not the most tremendous capacity. Business and building were not enough to absorb his vast energies. He was a gambler. The stakes at his tables were terribly high. So they were at Madame Foucquet's. In one day Gourville won eighteen thousand livres from the Comte d'Avaux. No money was laid on the table, but at the end of the game the players settled their accounts. They played not only for money, but for gems, ornaments, lace, collars, valued at seventy to eighty pistoles each.

Foucquet, playing against Gourville, in one day lost sixty thousand livres. "He played," said Gourville, "with cut cards which were worth ten or twenty pistoles each. I put one thousand pistoles before me almost desiring that he should win back something, which did happen. Nevertheless, he was not pleased to see I was leaving the game."*

This wild play was not altogether to the Superintendent's disadvantage. In the end his intimate friends, who were great personages, were ruined,

* Gourville, in *Monmerqué*, Vol. II, p. 342.

and came to him for mercy. Thus, for instance, he held in his power Hugues de Lyonne—the great Lyonne. But he himself was at his last gasp, and overwhelmed with anxiety.

Sole Superintendent of Finance since Servien's death, on the 17th February, 1659, Foucquet had filled Mazarin's crop without having won him, for Mazarin loved and served only himself, his own people and the State. As a private individual he was self-interested, covetous and miserly. As a public man he desired the good of the kingdom, the greatness of France. He was never grateful to his public servants for anything they did for him personally. Foucquet felt this; he perceived that he had no hold over this man, and that Mazarin, when dying, might ruin him, having no further need of him.

For Mazarin was dying; he was dying with all the heartrending regret of a Magnifico who feels that he is being torn from his jewels, his tapestries and his books—beautifully bound in morocco, delicately tooled—and also, by a curious inconsistency, with the serenity of a great statesman, of another Richelieu, full of a generous grief that he could no longer play his part in those great affairs which had rendered his life illustrious. He was anxious to assure the prosperity of the kingdom after his death. "Sire," he said to the young Louis XIV, "I owe

you everything, but I think I can to some extent discharge my debt by giving you Colbert.”*

At the very point of death, he was conferring with the King in secret conversations, which caused Foucquet great anxiety, because they were hidden from him. Then, at length, the lights were extinguished in those eyes which had so long sought for gold and sumptuous draperies, and pierced the hearts of men.

On the 9th of March, 1661, as Foucquet, leaving his house of Saint-Mandé, was crossing the Gardens on foot to go to Vincennes, he met young Brienne, who was getting out of his coach, and learned from him the great news.

“He is dead, then!” murmured Foucquet. “Henceforth I shall not know in whom to confide. People always do things by halves. Oh, how distressing! The King is waiting for me, and I ought to be among the first there! My God! Monsieur de Brienne, tell me what is happening, so that I may not commit any indiscretion through ignorance.”†

The day after Mazarin’s death, the King of twenty-three summoned Foucquet, with the Chancellor, Seguier, the Ministers and Secretaries of State, and addressed them in these words: “Hitherto

* *Mémoires de l'abbé de Choisy*, p. 579.

† *Mémoires de Brienne*, Vol. II, p. 52.

I have been content to leave my affairs in the hands of the late Cardinal. It is time for me to control them myself. You will help me with your counsels when I ask you for them. Gentlemen, I forbid you to sign anything, not even a safe conduct, or a passport, without my command. I request you to give me personally an account of everything every day, to favour no one in your lists of the month. And you, Monsieur le Surintendant, I have explained to you my wishes ; I request you to employ M. Colbert, whom the late Cardinal has recommended to me." Foucquet thought that the King was not speaking seriously. That error ruined him.

He believed that it would be easy to amuse and deceive the youthful mind of the King, and he set to work to do so with all the ardour, all the grace and all the frivolity of his nature. He determined to govern the kingdom and the King. Foucquet did not know Louis XIV, and Louis XIV did know Foucquet. Warned by Mazarin, the King knew that Foucquet was engaged in dubious proceedings, and was ready to resort to any expedient. He knew, also, that he was a man of resource and of talent. He took him apart and told him that he was determined to be King, and to have a precise and complete knowledge of State affairs ; that he would begin with finance, it was the most important part of his administration, and that he was determined

to restore order and regularity to that department. He asked the Superintendent to instruct him minutely in every detail, and he bade him conceal nothing, declaring that he would always employ him, provided that he found him sincere. As for the past, he was prepared to forget that, but he wished that in future the Superintendent would let him know the true state of the finances.*

In speaking thus, Louis XIV told the truth. He has explained himself in his *Mémoires*. "It may be a cause of astonishment," he says, "that I was willing to employ him at a time when I was aware of his peculations, but I knew that he was intelligent and thoroughly acquainted with all the most intimate affairs of State, and this made me think that, provided he would confess his past faults and promise to correct them, he might render me good service."

No one could speak more wisely, more kindly ; but the audacious Foucquet did not realize that there was something menacing in this wisdom and this kindness. The spirit of imprudence and error possessed him. He was labouring blindly to bring about his own fall. Day by day, despite the advice of his best friends, he presented the King with false accounts of his expenditure and revenue. For five

* *Mémoires de Choisy*, p. 581. Chéruel, *Mémoires sur Nicolas Foucquet*, Vol. II, p. 97.

months he believed that he was deceiving Louis XIV, but every evening the King placed his accounts in the hands of Colbert, whom he had nominated Intendant of Finance, with the special duty of watching Foucquet. Colbert showed the King the falsifications in these accounts. On the following day the King would patiently seek to draw some confession from the guilty Minister, who, with false security, persisted in his lies.

Henceforth Foucquet was a ruined man. From the month of April, 1661, Colbert's clerks openly prophesied his speedy fall. He began to be afraid, but it was too late. He went and threw himself at the King's feet—it was at Fontainebleau—he reminded him that Cardinal Mazarin had regulated finance with absolute authority, without observing any formality, and had constrained him, the Superintendent, to do many things which might expose him to prosecution. He did not deny his own personal faults, and admitted that his expenditure had been excessive. He entreated the King to pardon him for the past, and promised to serve him faithfully in the future. The King listened to his Minister with apparent goodwill ; his lips murmured words of pardon, but in his heart he had already passed sentence on Foucquet.

Is it true that some private jealousy inspired the King's vengeance? Foucquet, according to the

Abbé de Choisy,* had sent Madame de Plessis-Bellièvre to tell Mademoiselle de Lavallière that the Superintendent had twenty thousand pistoles at her service. The lady had replied that twenty million would not induce her to take a false step. "Which astonished the worthy intermediary, who was little used to such replies," adds the Abbé. However this may be, Foucquet soon perceived that the fortress was taken, and that it was dangerous to tread upon the heels of the royal occupant. But in order to repair his fault he committed a second, worse than the first. Again it is Choisy who tells us. "Wishing to justify himself to her, and to her secret lover, he himself undertook the mission of go-between, and, taking her apart in Madame's antechamber, he sought to tell her that the King was the greatest prince in the world, the best looking, and other little matters. But the lady, proud of her heart's secret, cut him short, and that very evening complained of him to the King."†

Such a piece of audacity, and one so clumsy, could only irritate the young and royal lover. Nevertheless, it was not to a secret jealousy, but to State interest, that Louis XIV sacrificed his prevaricating Minister.

His intentions are above suspicion. It was in the interest of the Crown and of the State alone that

* *Mémoires de Choisy*, p. 249.

† *Ibid.*, p. 249.

he acted. Yet we can but feel surprised to find so young a man employing so much strategy and so much dissimulation in order to ruin one whom he had appeared to pardon. In this piece of diplomacy Louis XIV and Colbert both displayed an excess of skill. With perfidious adroitness they manœuvred to deprive Fouquet of his office of Attorney-General, which was an obstacle in their way, for an officer of the Parliament could be tried only by that body, and Fouquet had so many partisans in Parliament that there was no hope that it would ever condemn him.

Louis XIV pretended to trust Fouquet and redoubled his favours; Colbert, acting with the King, was constantly praising his generosity. He was, at the same time, inducing him to testify his gratitude by filling the treasury without having recourse to bargains with supporters, which were so burdensome to the State. Fouquet replied: "I would willingly sell all that I have in the world in order to procure money for the King."

Colbert refrained from pressing him further, but he contrived to lead the conversation to the office of Attorney-General. Fouquet told him one day that he had been offered fifteen hundred thousand livres for it.

"But, sir," answered Colbert, "do you wish to sell it? It is true that it is of no great use to you.

A Minister who is Superintendent has no time to watch lawsuits." The matter did not go any farther at that time ; but they returned to it later, and Foucquet, thinking himself established in his sovereign's favour, said one day to Colbert that he was inclined to sell his office in order to give its price to the King. Colbert applauded this resolution, and Foucquet went immediately to tell Louis XIV, who thanked him and accepted the offer immediately. The trick was played.*

The King had done his part to bring about this excellent result by making Foucquet think that he would create him a *chevalier de l'Ordre*, and first Minister, as soon as he was no longer Attorney-General. Here is a deal of duplicity to prepare the way for an act of justice ! Foucquet sold his office for fourteen hundred thousand livres to Achille de Harlay, who paid for it partly in cash. A million was taken to Vincennes, " where the King wished to keep it for secret expenditure."†

Loret announced this fact in his letter of the 14th August :

Ce politique renommé
Qui par ses bontés m'a charmé,
Ce judicieux, ce grand homme
Que Monseigneur Foucquet on nomme,

* *Choisy*, p. 586. " I learnt these details," said Choisy, " from Perrault, to whom Colbert related them more than once."

† *Ibid.*, p. 586. Cf. also Guy Patin, letter to Falconnet, 2nd September, 1661.

Si généreux, si libéral,
 N'est plus procureur général.
 Une autre prudente cervelle,
 Que Monsieur Harlay on appelle,
 En a par sa démission
 Maintenant la possession.

As a further act of prudence, and in order completely to lay Foucquet's suspicions to rest, Louis XIV accepted the entertainment which Foucquet offered him in the Château de Vaux. "For a long time," said Madame de Lafayette, "the King had said that he wanted to go to Vaux, the Superintendent's magnificent house, and although Foucquet ought to have been too wary to show the King the very thing that proved so plainly what bad use he had made of the public finances, and though the King's natural kindness ought to have prevented him from visiting a man whom he was about to ruin, neither of them considered this aspect of the affair."*

The whole Court went to Vaux on the 17th August, 1661.†

These festivities exasperated Louis XIV. "Ah, Madame," he said to his mother, "shall we not make all these people disgorge?" Infallible signs announced the approaching catastrophe. In his Council, the King proposed to suppress those very

* *Histoire d'Henriette d'Angleterre*, by Mme de Lafayette. Paris, Charavay frères, 1882, p. 53.

† See Part II for the story of this entertainment.

orders to pay cash which served, as we have said, to cover the secret expenditure of the superintendents. The Chancellor strongly supported the proposal. "Do I count for nothing, then?" cried Foucquet indiscreetly. Then he suddenly corrected himself and said that other ways would be found to provide for the secret expenses of the State. "I myself will provide for them," said Louis XIV. Nevertheless, Foucquet, though deprived of the gown, was still a formidable enemy. Before he could be reduced his Breton strongholds must be captured. The prudent King had thought of this, and presently devised a clever stratagem. As there was need of money, it was resolved to increase the taxation of the State domains. This impost, described euphemistically as a gratuitous gift, was voted by the Provincial Assemblies. The presence of the King seemed necessary to determine the Breton Estates to make a great financial sacrifice, and Foucquet himself advised the King to go to Nantes, where the Provincial Assembly was to be held.* Thus Foucquet himself helped to bring about his own ruin. At Nantes he had a sorrowful presentiment of this. He was suffering from an intermittent fever, the attacks of which were very weakening. "Why," he said, in a low voice to Brienne, "is the King going to

* Cf. *Mémoires sur Nicolas Foucquet*, by Chéruef, Vol. II, pp. 179-180.

Brittany, and to Nantes in particular? Is it not in order to make sure of Belle-Isle?" And several times in his weakness he murmured: "Nantes, Belle-Isle!" When Brienne went out, he embraced him with tears in his eyes.*

The King arrived at Nantes on the 1st of September, and took up his abode at the Château. Foucquet had his lodging at the other end of the town, in a house which communicated with the Loire by means of a subterranean passage. In that way he could reach the river, where a boat was waiting for him, and escape to Belle-Isle.

Summoned by the King, on the 5th September, at seven o'clock in the morning, he went to the Council Meeting, which was prolonged until eleven o'clock. During this time meticulous measures were taken for his arrest, and for the seizure of his papers. The Council over, the King detained Foucquet to discuss various matters with him. Finally, he dismissed him, and Foucquet entered his chair. Having come through the gate of the château, he had passed into a little square near the Cathedral, when D'Artagnan, 2nd Lieutenant of the Company of Musketeers, signed to him to get out. Foucquet obeyed, and D'Artagnan read him the warrant for his arrest. The Superintendent expressed great surprise at this misfortune, and asked the officer to

* *Mémoires de Brienne*, Vol. II, p. 153.

avoid attracting public attention. The latter took him into a house which was near at hand ; it was that of the Archdeacon of Nantes, whose niece had been Foucquet's first wife. A cup of broth was given to the prisoner ; the papers he had on him were taken and sealed. In one of the King's coaches he was conveyed to the Château d'Angers. There he remained for three months, from the 7th of September to the 1st of December.

Meanwhile his prosecution was being prepared. Certain letters from women, found in a casket at Saint-Mandé, were taken to Fontainebleau, and given to the King. They combined a great deal of gallantry with a great deal of politics. Many women's names were to be read in them, or guessed at. Madame Scarron's was mentioned and even Madame de Sévigné's, but in an innocent connection. On the whole, only one woman, Menneville, was shown to be guilty.

Foucquet was removed from Angers to Saumur. Taken on the 2nd of December to La Chapelle-Blanche, he lodged on the 3rd in a suburb of Tours, and from the 4th to the 25th of December remained in the Château d'Amboise. Shortly after Foucquet's departure, La Fontaine, in company with his uncle, Jannart, who had been exiled to Limousin, halted below the château and swept his eyes over the fair and smiling valley.

"All this," he said, "poor Monsieur Foucquet during his imprisonment here, could never enjoy for a single moment. All the windows of his room had been blocked up, leaving only a little gap at the top. I asked to see him ; a melancholy pleasure, I admit, but I did ask. The soldier who escorted us had no key, so that I was left for a long time gazing at the door, and I got them to tell me how the prisoner was guarded. I should like to describe it to you, but the recollection is too painful.

Qu'est-il besoin que je retrace
 Une garde au soin non pareil,
 Chambre murée, étroite place,
 Quelque peu d'air pour toute grâce ;
 Jours sans soleil,
 Nuits sans sommeil ;
 Trois portes en six pieds d'espace !
 Vous peindre un tel appartement,
 Ce serait attirer vos larmes ;
 Je l'ai fait insensiblement,
 Cette plainte a pour moi des charmes.

Nothing but the approach of night could have dragged me from the spot."*

On the 31st of December, Foucquet reached Vincennes. As he passed, he caught sight of his house at Saint-Mandé, in which he had collected all that can flatter and adorn life, and which he was never again to inhabit. He was, indeed, to remain in

* La Fontaine, letter to his wife, Ed. Marty-Laveaux, Vol. III, p. 311 *et seq.*

the Bastille until after his condemnation ; that is to say, for more than three years ; and he left that fortress only to suffer an imprisonment of which the protracted severity has become a legend.

On the stricken financier the public anger was now let loose. The people whose poverty had been insulted by his ostentatious display wished to snatch him from his guards and tear him to pieces in the streets. Several times during the journey from Nantes, D'Artagnan had been obliged to protect his prisoner from riotous mobs of peasants. In the higher classes of society the indignation was fully as bitter, although it was only expressed in words.

Society never forgave Fouquet for having allowed his love-letters to be seized. It considered that to keep and classify women's letters in this manner was not the act of a gallant gentleman. Such was the opinion of Chapelain, who wrote to Madame de Sévigné :

“ Was it not enough to ruin the State, and to render the King odious to his people by the enormous burdens which he imposed upon them, and to employ the public finances in impudent expenditure and insolent acquisitions, which were compatible neither with his honour nor with his office, and which, on the other hand, tended rather to turn his subjects and his servants against him, and to corrupt them ? Was it necessary to crown his

irregularities and his crimes, by erecting in his own honour a trophy of favours, either real or apparent, of the modesty of so many ladies of rank, and by keeping a shameful record of his commerce with them in order that the shipwreck of his fortunes should also be that of their reputations?

“Is this consistent with being, I do not say an upright man, in which capacity, his flatterers, the Scarrons, Pellissons and Sapphos, and the whole of that self-interested scum have so greatly extolled him, but merely a man, a man with a spark of enlightenment, who professes to be something better than a brute? I cannot excuse such scandalous, dastardly behaviour, and I should be hardly less enraged with this wretch if your name had not been found among his papers.”*

We can admire such generous indignation, but it is hard to be called “self-interested scum” when one is merely faithful in misfortune.

The truth is that Foucquet still had friends; the women and the poets did not abandon him. Hesnault, to whom he had given a pension, was not a favourite of the Muses, but he showed himself a man of feeling, and his courageous fidelity did him credit. He attacked Colbert in an eloquent sonnet, which was circulated everywhere by the prisoner’s friends:

* This letter was published for the first time in *Les Causeries d’un curieux*, Vol. II, p. 518.

Ministre avare et lâche, esclave malheureux,
 Qui gémit sous le poids des affaires publiques,
 Victime dévouée aux chagrins politiques,
 Fantôme révééré sous un titre onéreux :

Vois combien des grandeurs le comble est dangereux ;
 Contemple de Fouquet les funestes reliques,
 Et tandis qu'à sa perte en secret tu t'appliques,
 Crains qu'on ne te prépare un destin plus affreux !

Sa chute, quelque jour, te peut être commune ;
 Crains ton poste, ton rang, la cour et la fortune ;
 Nul ne tombe innocent d'où l'on te voit monté.

Cesse donc d'animer ton prince à son supplice,
 Et près d'avoir besoin de toute sa bonté,
 Ne le fais pas user de toute sa justice.

This sonnet was circulated privately. It was generally read with pleasure, for Colbert was not liked, and it will not be inappropriate to cite here an anecdote for which Bayle is responsible.*

When the sonnet was mentioned to the Minister, he asked : " Is the King offended by it ? " And when he was told that he was not, " Then neither am I," he said, " nor do I bear the author any ill will."

If Molière kept silence, Corneille, on the contrary, now gave proof of his greatness of soul ; by praising Pellisson's fidelity, he showed that he shared it :

En vain pour ébranler ta fidèle constance,
 On vit fondre sur toi la force et la puissance ;
 En vain dans la Bastille, on t'accabla de fers,
 En vain on te flatta sur mille appas divers ;

* *Dictionnaire Antique*. Article on Hesnault.

Ton grand cœur, inflexible aux rigueurs, aux caresses,
 Triompha de la force et se rit des promesses ;
 Et comme un grand rocher par l'orage insulté
 Des flots audacieux méprise la fierté,
 Et, sans craindre le bruit qui gronde sur sa tête,
 Voit briser à ses pieds l'effort de la tempête,
 C'est ainsi, Pellisson, que dans l'adversité,
 Ton intrépide cœur garde sa fermeté,
 Et que ton amitié, constante et généreuse,
 Du milieu des dangers sortit victorieuse.

Poor Loret found it difficult at first to collect his bewildered wits and relate the catastrophe. It was a terrible affair ; he didn't know much about it, and he says still less. But, far from accusing the fallen Minister, he was inclined to pity and esteem him. This was courageous ; and his bad verses were a kind action :

Notre Roi, qui par politique
 Se transportait vers l'Amorique,
 Pour raisons qu'on ne savait pas,
 S'en revient, dit-on, à grands pas.
 Je n'ai su par aucun message
 Les circonstances du voyage :
 Mais j'ai du bruit commun appris,
 C'est-à-dire de tout Paris,
 Que par une expresse ordonnance,
 Le sieur surintendant de France
 Je ne sais pourquoi ni comment,
 Est arrêté présentement
 (Nouvelles des plus surprenantes)
 Dans la ville et château de Nantes,
 Certes, j'ai toujours respecté
 Les ordres de Sa Majesté
 Et crû que ce monarque auguste
 Ne commandait rien que de juste ;

Mais étant rémemoratif
Que cet infortuné captif
M'a toujours semblé bon et sage
Et que d'un obligeant langage
Il m'a quelquefois honoré,
J'avoue en avoir soupiré,
Ne pouvant, sans trop me contraindre,
Empêcher mon cœur de le plaindre.
Si, sans préjudice du Roi
(Et je le dis de bonne foi)
Je pouvais lui rendre service
Et rendre son sort plus propice
En adoucissant sa rigueur,
Je le ferais de tout mon cœur ;
Mais ce seul désir est frivole,
Et prions Dieu qu'il le console.
En l'état qu'il est aujourd'hui,
C'est tout ce que je puis pour lui.*

In time poor Loret did more ; he tried to deny his benefactor's crimes. " I doubt half of them," he said in the execrable style of the rhyming Gazetteer :†

Et par raison et par pitié,
Et même pour la conséquence
Je passe le tout sous silence.

Pellisson was admirable. He wrote from the Bastille, where he was imprisoned, eloquent defences in which, neglecting his own cause, he sought only to justify Foucquet. His defence followed the same lines as that of Foucquet himself. He pleaded the necessities of France, the need of provisioning and

* Letter of the 10th of September, 1661.

† Letter of the 2nd October, 1661.

equipping her armies and of fortifying her strongholds. He imagined a case in which Mazarin himself might have been criticized for the means by which he had procured money for the war and ensured victory. "In all conscience," he said, "what man of good sense could have advised him to reply in other than Scipio's words: 'Here are my accounts: I present them but only to tear them up. On this day a year ago I signed a general peace, and the contract of the King's marriage, which gave peace to Europe. Let us go and celebrate this anniversary at the foot of the altar.' " *

Mademoiselle de Scudéry distinguished herself by her zeal on behalf of her friend, formerly so powerful, and now so unfortunate. Pecquet, whom the Superintendent had chosen as his doctor, in order that he might discourse with him on physics and philosophy, the learned Jean Pecquet, was inconsolable at having lost so good a master. He used to say that Pecquet had always rhymed, and always would rhyme with Foucquet. †

As for La Fontaine, all know how his fidelity, rendered still more touching by his ingenuous emotions and the spell of his poetry, adorns and defends the memory of Nicolas Foucquet to this very day. Nothing can equal the divine complaint

* Second Speech to the King, in *Les Œuvres diverses*, p. 109.

† Cf. *Mélanges*, by Vigneul de Marville.

in which the truest of poets grieved over the disgrace of his magnificent patron.

ÉLÉGIE*

Remplissez l'air de cris en vos grottes profondes,
 Pleurez, nymphes de Vaux, faites croître vos ondes ;
 Et que l'Anqueilt† enflé ravage les trésors
 Dont les regards de Flore ont embelli vos bords.
 On ne blâmera point vos larmes innocentes,
 Vous pourrez donner cours à vos douleurs pressantes ;
 Chacun attend de vous ce devoir généreux :
 Les destins sont contents, Oronte est malheureux‡
 Vous l'avez vu naguère au bord de vos fontaines,
 Qui sans craindre du sort les faveurs incertaines,
 Plein d'éclat, plein de gloire, adoré des mortels,
 Recevait des honneurs qu'on ne doit qu'aux autels.
 Hélas ! qu'il est déchu de ce bonheur suprême !
 Que vous le trouverez différent de lui-même !
 Pour lui les plus beaux jours sont de secondes nuits,
 Les soucis dévorans, les regrets, les ennuis,
 Hôtes infortunés de sa triste demeure,
 En des gouffres de maux le plongent à toute heure

* Such is the title of the original edition, printed in italics, without date or address, on three quarto pages.

† "The Anqueil is a little river which flows near Vaux." (Note by La Fontaine.)

‡ Variant :

La Cabale est contente, Oronte est malheureux.

"In a letter written under the name of M. de la Visclède, to the permanent secretary of the Academy of Pau, in 1776, Voltaire," says M. Marty-Laveaux, "quotes these verses, and adds: 'He (La Fontaine) altered the word *Cabale* when he had been made to realize that the great Colbert was serving the King with great equity, and was not addicted to cabals. But La Fontaine had heard some one make use of the term, and had fully believed that it was the proper word to use.'"

Voilà le précipice où l'ont enfin jeté
 Les attraita enchanteurs de la prospérité !
 Dans les palais des Rois cette plainte est commune ;
 On n'y connaît que trop les jeux de la fortune,
 Ses trompeuses faveurs, ses appas inconstants :
 Mais on ne les connaît que quand il n'est plus temps,
 Lorsque sur cette mer on vogue à pleines voiles,
 Qu'on croit avoir pour soi les vents et les étoiles.
 Il est bien malaisé de régler ses désirs ;
 Le plus sage s'endort sur la foi des zéphirs.
 Jamais un favori ne borne sa carrière,
 Il ne regarde point ce qu'il laisse en arrière ;
 Et tout ce vain amour des grandeurs et du bruit
 Ne le saurait quitter qu'après l'avoir détruit.
 Tant d'exemples fameux que l'histoire en raconte
 Ne suffisaient-ils pas sans la perte d'Oronte ?
 Ah ! si ce faux éclat n'eût point fait ses plaisirs,
 Si le séjour de Vaux eût borné ses désirs
 Qu'il pouvait doucement laisser couler son âge !
 Vous n'avez pas chez vous ce brillant équipage,
 Cette foule de gens qui s'en vont chaque jour
 Saluer à longs flots le soleil de la cour :
 Mais la faveur du ciel vous donne en récompense
 Du repos, du loisir, de l'ombre et du silence,
 Un tranquille sommeil, d'innocents entretiens,
 Et jamais à la cour on ne trouve ces biens.
 Mais quittons ces penses, Oronte nous appelle.
 Vous, dont il a rendu la demeure si belle,
 Nymphes, qui lui devez vos plus charmants appas,
 Si le long de vos bords Louis porte ses pas,
 Tâchez de l'adoucir, fléchissez son courage ;
 Il aime ses sujets, il est juste, il est sage ;
 Du titre de clément, rendez-le ambitieux ;
 C'est par là que les Rois sont semblables aux dieux.
 Du magnanisme Henri* qu'il contemple la vie ;

* Variant :

Du grand, du grand Henri qu'il contemple la vie.
 (Original edition.)

Dès qu'il put se venger, il en perdit l'envie.
 Inspirez à Louis cette même douceur :
 La plus belle victoire est de vaincre son cœur.
 Oronte est à présent un objet de clémence ;
 S'il a cru les conseils d'une aveugle puissance,
 Il est assez puni par son sort rigoureux,
 Et c'est être innocent que d'être malheureux.*

La Fontaine, not satisfied with this poem, addressed an ode to the King on Foucquet's behalf. But the ode is far from equalling the elegy.

. . . Oronte seul, ta créature,
 Languit dans un profond ennui,
 Et les bienfaits de la nature
 Ne se répandent plus sur lui.
 Tu peux d'un éclat de ta foudre
 Achever de le mettre en poudre ;
 Mais si les dieux à ton pouvoir
 Aucunes bornes n'ont prescrites,
 Moins ta grandeur a de limites,
 Plus ton courroux en doit avoir.

.
 Va-t-en punir l'orgueil du Tibre ;
 Qu'il se souviennne que ses lois

* Edition quoted, Vol. V, pp. 43-46. One contemporary copy, preserved in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, contains a text altered by one of Foucquet's enemies.

Instead of the two lines :

Voilà le précipice où l'ont enfin jeté
 Les attrails enchanteurs de la prospérité,

we read in this copy :

Il se hait de tant vivre après un tel malheur,
 Et, s'il espère encor, ce n'est qu'en sa douleur,
 C'est là le seul plaisir qui flatte son courage,
 Car des autres plaisirs on lui défend l'usage.
 Voilà, voilà l'effet de cette ambition
 Qui fait de ses pareils l'unique passion.

N'ont jadis rien laissé de libre
 Que le courage des Gaulois.
 Mais parmi nous sois débonnaire :
 A cet empire si sévère
 Tu ne te peux accoutumer ;
 Et ce serait trop te contraindre :
 Les étrangers te doivent craindre,
 Tes sujets te veulent aimer.

These lines refer to the attack made by the Corsicans on the Guard of Alexander VII, who, on the 20th August, 1667, fired on the coach of the Duc de Créquy, the French Ambassador.

L'amour est fils de la clémence,
 La clémence est fille des dieux ;
 Sans elle toute leur puissance
 Ne serait qu'un titre odieux.
 Parmi les fruits de la victoire,
 César environné de gloire
 N'en trouva point dont la douceur
 A celui-ci pût être égale,
 Non pas même aux champs où Pharsale
 L'honora du nom de vainqueur.

Laisse-lui donc pour toute grâce
 Un bien qui ne lui peut durer,
 Après avoir perdu la place
 Que ton cœur lui fit espérer.
 Accorde-nous les faibles restes
 De ses jours tristes et funestes,
 Jours qui se passent en soupirs :
 Ainsi les tiens filés de soie
 Puissent se voir comblés de joie,
 Même au delà de tes désirs.*

* Edition cited : Vol. V, pp. 46-49. Published for the first time by La Fontaine in his collection *Poésies chrétiennes et diverses*, 1671, Vol. III, p. 34.

La Fontaine submitted this ode to Foucquet, who sent it back to him with various suggestions. The prisoner requested that the reference to Rome should be suppressed. Doubtless he did not understand it, not having heard in prison of the attack upon the French Ambassador at the Papal Court.* He also disapproved of the allusion to the clemency of the victor of Pharsalia. "Cæsar's example," he said, "being derived from antiquity would not, I think, be well enough known." He also noted some passage—I know not which—"as being too poetical to please the King." The last suggestion indicates a true nobility of mind. It refers to the closing passage, in which the poet implores the King to grant the life of "Oronte." Foucquet wrote in the margin: "You sue too humbly for a thing that one ought to despise."

La Fontaine did not willingly give in on any of these points; to the last suggestion he replied as follows: "The sentiment is worthy of you, Monsignor, and, in truth, he who regards life with such indifference does not deserve to die. Perhaps you have not considered that it is I who am speaking, I who ask for a favour which is dearer to us than to you. There are no terms too humble, too pathetic

* La Fontaine, Letter to Monsieur Foucquet. Edition cited: Vol. III, pp. 307-308. This letter was published for the first time in 1729.

and too urgent to be employed in such circumstances. When I bring you on to the stage, I shall put into your mouth words which are suitable to the greatness of your soul. Meanwhile permit me to tell you that you have too little affection for a life such as yours."

It was only in the month of November that a Chamber was instituted by Royal Edict with the object of instituting financial reforms, and of punishing those who had been guilty of maladministration. Foucquet was to appear before this Chamber. It met solemnly in the month of December. The greater part of it was composed of Members of the Parliament, but it also included Members of the *Chambre des Comptes*, the *Cour des Aides*, the Grand Council and the Masters of Requests. The magistrates who composed it were the following, to mention those only who sat in it as finally constituted :

The Chancellor Pierre Séguier, first President of the Parliament of Paris, who presided ; Guillaume de Lamoignon, deputy president ; the President de Nesmond ; the President de Pontchartrain ; Poncet, Master of Requests ; Olivier d'Ormesson, Master of Requests ; Voysin, Master of Requests ; Besnard de Rezé, Master of Requests ; Regnard, Catinat, De Brillac, Fayet, Councillors in the Grand Chamber of the Paris Parliament ; Massenau, Coun-

cillor in the Toulouse Parliament ; De la Baulme, of the Grenoble Parliament ; Du Verdier, of the Bordeaux Parliament ; De la Toison, of the Dijon Parliament ; Lecormier de Sainte-Hélène, of the Rouen Parliament ; Raphélis de Roquesante, of the Aix Parliament ; Hérault, of the Rennes Parliament ; Noguès, of the Pau Parliament ; Ferriol, of the Metz Parliament ; De Moussy, of the Paris Chambre des Comptes ; Le-Bossu-le-Jau, of the Paris Chambre des Comptes ; Le Féron, of the Cour des aides ; De Baussan, of the Cour des aides ; Cuissotte de Gisaucourt, of the Grand Council ; Pussort, of the Grand Council.

It must be admitted that the creation of such a Chamber of Justice was in conformity with the rules of public law as it then existed. Had not Chalais and Marillac, Cinq-Mars and Thou, been judged by commissions of Masters of Requests and Councillors of the Parliament ? And, if our sense of legality is wounded when we behold the accusing Monarch himself choosing the judges of the accused man, we must remember that this maxim was then firmly established : “ All justice emanates from the King.” By this very circumstance the Chamber of Justice of 1661 was invested with very extensive powers ; it became the object of public respect, and of the public hopes, for the poor, deeming it powerful, attributed to it the power of helping the

wretched populace, after it had punished those who robbed them.

Such illusions are very natural, and one may wonder whether any government would be possible if unhappy persons did not, from day to day, expect something better on the morrow.

Thus the tribunal constituted by the King was no unrighteous tribunal; yet the accused had nothing to hope from it. He was apparently ruined. Condemned beforehand by the King and by the people, everything seemed to fail him, but he did not fail himself. After having wrought his own ruin, Foucquet worked out his own salvation, if he may be said to have saved himself when all he saved was his life.

His first act was to protest energetically against the competence of the Chamber; he alleged that, having held office in the Parliament for twenty-five years, he was still entitled to the privileges of its officers, and he recognized no judges except those of that body, of both Chambers united. Having made this reservation, he consented to reply to the questions of the examining magistrates, and his replies bore witness to the scope and vigour of a mind which was always collected. The Chamber, on its side, declared itself competent, and decided that the trial should be conducted as though Foucquet were dumb: that is, that there would be

no cross-examination, and no pleading. By this method of procedure the Attorney-General put his questions in writing, and the accused replied in writing. As the documents of the prosecution and of the defence were produced, the recorders prepared summaries for the judges.*

It is obvious that in such a case the recorders, who are the necessary intermediaries between the magistrates and the parties to the case, possess considerable influence, and that the issue of the lawsuit depends largely on their intelligence and their morality. Consequently, the King wished to reserve to himself the right of appointing them, although, according to tradition, this belonged to the President of the Chamber.

Messieurs Olivier d'Ormesson and Le Cormier de Sainte-Hélène were chosen by the Royal Council, and their names were put before the First President, Guillaume de Lamoignon. This magistrate apologized for being unable to accede to the King's wish, alleging that M. Olivier d'Ormesson and M. de Sainte-Hélène would be suspected by the accused; at least, he feared so. "This fear," replied the King, "is only another reason for appointing them."

* Cf. *Le procès de Fouquet*, a speech pronounced at the opening of the *Conférence des Avocats*, Monday, 27th November, 1882, by Léon Deroy, advocate in the Court of Appeal. Paris, Alcan Lévy, 1882.

Lamoignon—and it did him honour—gave way only upon the King's formal command.

That was quite enough to make Lamoignon suspected by Foucquet's enemies. Powerful as they were, he did nothing to justify their suspicion ; on the contrary, he saw that the accused was granted the assistance of counsel, and that the forms of procedure were scrupulously observed. When one day Colbert was trying to discover his opinions, Lamoignon made this fine reply: "A judge ought never to declare his opinion save once, and that above the fleurs-de-lys."*

The King, growing more and more suspicious, nominated Chancellor Séguier to preside over the Chamber. Lamoignon, thus driven from his seat, withdrew, but unostentatiously, alleging as his reason that Parliamentary affairs occupied the whole of his time.†

In vain the King and Colbert, alarmed at having themselves dismissed so upright a magistrate, endeavoured to restore him to a position of diminished authority ; he was deaf to entreaties, and was content to say to his friends : "*Lavavi manus meas ; quomodo inquinabo eas ?*"‡ Old Séguier, who

* *Recueil des arrêts* de G. de Lamoignon, Paris, 1781. *Vie de M. le premier président*, by Girard, p. 25. (The fleur-de-lys was very largely employed in the decoration of the walls, floors, ceiling, etc., of the Parliaments, etc.—Ed.)

† *Journal d'Olivier d'Ormesson*, Vol. II, p. 26.

‡ *Recueil des arrêts*, already cited.

though lacking in nobility of soul possessed brilliant intellectual powers, grew more servile than ever. Feeling that he had not long to live, he promptly accepted dishonour. His conduct in this trial was execrable and his talents, on this occasion, did not succeed in masking his partiality. Great jurisconsult though he was, he did not understand finance, and this stupendous trial was altogether too much for an old man of seventy-four. He was always impatiently complaining of the length of the trial, which, he declared, would outlast him.

With audacity and skill Foucquet held his own against this violent judge. Brought up in chicanery, the accused was acquainted with all the mysteries of procedure. He made innumerable difficulties; sometimes he accused a judge, sometimes he challenged the accuracy of an inventory, sometimes he demanded documents necessary for the defence. In short, he gained time, and this was to gain much. The more protracted the trial, the less he had to fear that its termination would be a capital sentence.

The King was not at all comfortable as to its issue; his activity was unwearying, and he never hesitated to throw his whole weight into the balance. The public prosecutor, Talon, was not an able person; he allowed himself to be worsted by the accused, and was immediately sacrificed. He was replaced by two Masters of Requests, Hotmann

and Chamillart. One of the recorders caused the Court a great deal of anxiety ; this was the worthy Olivier d'Ormesson. Efforts were made to intimidate him, but in vain ; to win him over, but equally in vain. He was punished. His offices of Intendant of Picardy and Soissonnais were taken away from him. Finally, the idea was conceived of enlisting his father, and of trying to induce the old man to corrupt the honesty of his son. Old André would not lend himself to these attempts at corruption ; he replied that he was sorry that the King was not satisfied with his son's behaviour. " My son," he added, " does what I have always recommended him to do : he fears God, serves the King, and he administers justice without distinction of persons."

The Court and the Minister were, indeed, exceeding all bounds ; Séguier, Pussort, Sainte-Hélène and others displayed the most odious partiality. False inventories were drawn up ; the official reports of the proceedings were falsified. The King carried off the Court of Justice with him to Fontainebleau, fearing lest it should become independent in his absence. This was going too far ; Foucquet grew interesting.

Public opinion, at first hostile to the accused, had almost completely turned in his favour, when, more than three years after his arrest, on the 14th October, 1664, the Attorney-General, Chamillart, pronounced

his conclusions, which were to the effect that Foucquet, "attainted and convicted of the crime of high treason, and other charges mentioned during the trial," should be "hanged and strangled until death should follow, on a gallows erected on the Place de la Rue Saint-Antoine, near the Bastille."

The trial was generally regarded as being over-weighted. Turenne said, in his picturesque manner, that the cord had been made too thick to strangle M. Foucquet. The financiers, always influential, having recovered from their first alarm, tried to save a man who, in his fall, might drag them down with him. For, in so comprehensive an accusation, who was there that was not compromised?

Colbert was now detested; as a result his enemy appeared less black. As for the Chamber itself, it was divided into two parts, almost of equal strength. On the one hand there were those who, like Séguier and Pussort, wished to please the Court by ruining Foucquet, and on the other those who, like Olivier d'Ormesson, favoured the strict administration of justice, exempt from anger and hatred.

It was on the 14th of November, 1664, that Nicolas Foucquet appeared for the first time before the Chamber, which sat in the Arsenal. He wore a citizen's costume, a suit of black cloth, with a mantle. He excused himself for appearing before the Court without his magistrate's robe, declaring

that he had asked for one in vain. He renewed the protest which he had made previously against the competency of the Chamber, and refused to take the oath. He then took his place on the prisoners' bench and declared himself ready to reply to the questions which might be put to him.

The accusations made against him may be classified under four heads : payment collected from the tax-farmers ; farmerships which he had granted under fictitious names ; advances made to the Treasury ; and the crime of high treason, projected but not executed, proved by the papers discovered at Saint-Mandé.

Fouquet's defence, which was free from all pettiness, was powerful and adroit. He confessed irregularities, but he held that the disorders of the administration in a time of public disturbance were responsible for them. According to him, the payments levied on the tax-farmers were merely the repayment of his advances, and the imposts which he had appropriated were the same. As for the loans which he had made to the State, they were an absolute necessity. To the insidious and insulting questions of the Chancellor he replied with the greatest adroitness. He was as bold as he was prudent. Only once he lost patience, and replied with an arrogance likely to do him harm. He certainly interested society. Ladies, in order to watch

him as he was being reconducted to the Bastille, used to repair, masked, to a house which looked on to the Arsenal. Madame de Sévigné was there. "When I saw him," she said, "my legs trembled, and my heart beat so loud that I thought I should faint. As he approached us to return to his gaol, M. d'Artagnan nudged him, and called his attention to the fact that we were there. He thereupon saluted us, and assumed that laughing expression which you know so well. I do not think he recognized me, but I confess to you that I felt strangely moved when I saw him enter that little door. If you knew how unhappy one is when one has a heart fashioned as mine is fashioned, I am sure you would take pity on me."*

All that was known about his attitude intensified public sympathy. The judges themselves recognized that he was incomparable ; that he had never spoken so well in Parliament, and that he had never shown so much self-possession.†

The last Interrogatory, that of the 4th December, turned on the scheme found at Saint-Mandé, and was particularly favourable to the accused.

Fouquet replied that it was nothing but an extravagant idea which had remained unfinished, and was repudiated as soon as conceived. It was an

* Madame de Sévigné, letter of the 27th November, 1664.

† *Ibid.*, letter of the 2nd December.

absurd document, which could only serve to make him ashamed and confused, but it could not be made the ground of an accusation against him. As the Chancellor pressed him and said, "You cannot deny that it is a crime against the State," he replied. "I confess, sir, that it is an extravagance, but it is not a crime against the State. I entreat these gentlemen," he added, turning towards the judges, "to permit me to explain what is a crime against the State. It is when a man holds a great office ; when he is in the secret confidence of his Sovereign, and suddenly takes his place among that Sovereign's enemies ; when he engages his whole family in the cause ; when he induces his son-in-law* to surrender the passes and to open the gates to a foreign army of intruders in order to admit it to the interior of the kingdom. Gentlemen, that is what is called a crime against the State."

The Chancellor, whose conduct during the Fronde every one remembered, did not know where to look, and it was all the judges could do not to laugh.†

The cross-examination over, the Chamber listened to the opinion of the recorders and pronounced sentence. On the 9th of December, Olivier d'Or-

* "The Duc de Sully, the son-in-law of the Chancellor, Séguier, had, in 1652, yielded the crossing of the bridge of Mantes to the Spanish Army." (Note by M. Chéruei.)

† *Journal d'Olivier d'Ormesson*, Vol. II, p. 263. Letter from Mme de Sévigné, 9th December.

messon began his report. He spoke for five successive days, and his conclusion was perpetual exile, confiscation of goods and a fine of one hundred thousand livres, of which half should be given to the Public Treasury, and the other half employed in works of piety. Le Cormier de Sainte-Hélène spoke after Olivier d'Ormesson. He continued for two days, and concluded with sentence of death. Pussort, whose vehement speech lasted for five hours, came to the same conclusion.

On the 18th December, Hérault, Gisaucourt, Noguès and Ferriol concurred, as did Le Cormier de Sainte-Hélène, and Roquesante after them, in the opinion of Olivier d'Ormesson.

On the following day, the 19th, MM. de La Toison, Du Verdier, de La Baume and de Massenau also expressed the same opinion; but the Master of Requests, Poncet, came to the opposite conclusion. Messieurs Le Féron, de Moussy, Brillac, Regnard and Besnard agreed with the first recorder. Voysin was of the opposite opinion. President de Pontchartrain voted for banishment, and the Chancellor, pronouncing last, voted for death. Thirteen judges had pronounced for banishment, and nine for death. Foucquet's life was saved.

"All Paris," said Olivier d'Ormesson, "awaited the news with impatience. It was spread abroad everywhere, and received with the greatest rejoicing,

even by the shopkeepers. Every one blessed my name, even without knowing me. Thus M. Foucquet, who had been regarded with horror at the time of his imprisonment, and whom all Paris would have been immeasurably delighted to see executed directly after the beginning of his trial, had become the subject of public grief and commiseration, owing to the hatred which every one felt for the present Government, and that, I think, was the true cause of the general acclamation.”*

On the 22nd of December, when this same Olivier d’Ormesson went to the Bastille to give D’Artagnan his discharge for the Treasury registers, the gallant Musketeer embraced him and said: “You are a noble man!”†

Foucquet, as a matter of form, protested against the sentence of a tribunal whose competence he did not recognize. And the sentence did not please the King, who commuted banishment into imprisonment for life in the fortress of Pignerol. Such a commutation, which was really an aggravation of the sentence, is cruel and offends our sense of justice. Nevertheless, one must recognize that such a measure was dictated by reasons of State. Foucquet, had he been free, would have been dangerous. He would certainly have intrigued;

* *Journal d’Olivier d’Ormesson*, Vol. II, p. 282.

† *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 283.

his plots and strategies would have caused the King much anxiety. The religion of patriotism had not yet taken root in the heart of the great Condé's contemporaries. The strongest bond then uniting citizens was loyalty to the King. Foucquet was liberated from that bond by his master's hatred and anger. It was to be expected that the fallen Minister would probably have conspired against France with foreign aid. These previsions justified the severity of the King, who throughout the whole business appeared hypocritical, violent, pitiless and patriotic.*

The wisdom of the King's action is proved by Foucquet's conduct at Pignerol, where he arrived in January, 1665. There, in spite of the most vigilant supervision, he succeeded in carrying on intrigues. He could not communicate with any living soul. He had neither ink nor pens, nor paper at his disposal. This able man, whose genius was quickened by solitude, attempted the impossible in order to enter into communication with his friends. He manufactured ink out of soot, moistened with wine. He made pens out of chicken bones, and wrote on the margin of books which were lent to him, or on handkerchiefs. But his warder, Saint-Mars, detected all these contrivances. The servants, whom the prisoner had won over, were arrested, and one of them was hanged.

* *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 286.

In the end, these futile energies were defeated by captivity and disease. Foucquet became addicted to devotional exercises. Like Mademoiselle de la Vallière, he wrote pious reflections.*

It is even thought that he composed religious verses, for it is known that he asked for a dictionary of rhymes, which was given to him.

For seven years he had been cut off from living men. Then a voice called him. It was Lauzun,† who was imprisoned at Pignerol, and who had made a hole in the wall. Lauzun told his companion news of the outer world. Foucquet listened eagerly, but when the Cadet de Gascogne told him that he held a general's commission, and that he had married La Grande Mademoiselle, at first with the approval of the King, and then without it, Foucquet considered him mad and ceased to believe anything that he said.

About 1679, Foucquet's captivity at length became less severe; he was permitted to receive his family. But it was too late; those fourteen cruel years had irreparably undermined his strong constitution; his sight had grown weak; he was losing

* The Comte de Vaux, Foucquet's eldest son, having obtained his father's MSS. from Pignerol, published extracts entitled: *Conseils de la Sagesse ou Recueil des Maximes de Salomon*. Paris, 1683, 2 vols.

† The Duc de Lauzun, said to have married La Grande Mademoiselle, Mlle de Montpensier, cousin of Louis XIV. (Trans.)

his teeth ; he was suffering pain in his whole body, and his piety was increasing with his weakness. He died in March, 1680, just as he had received permission to go and drink the waters of Bourbon. His body, which had been laid in the crypt of Sainte-Claire de Pignerol, Madame Foucquet had transferred the following year to the church of the Convent of the Visitation in the Rue du Faubourg-Saint-Antoine. The register of this church contains the following entry : “ On the 28th March, 1681, Messire Nicolas Foucquet was buried in our church, in the Chapel of Saint-François de Sales. He had risen to the highest honours in the magistracy ; had been Councillor in Parliament, Master of Requests, Attorney-General, Superintendent of Finance, and Minister of State.”*

Whatever may be said to the contrary, posterity's judgments are not just, for posterity is impartial, it is indifferent, and makes but hasty work of the trial of the dead who appear before it. And posterity is not a Court of Justice ; it is a noisy mob, in which it is impossible to make oneself heard, but which, at rare intervals, is dominated by some great voice. Finally, its judgments are not definitive, since another posterity follows which may cancel the sentence of the first, and pronounce new ones, which again may be revoked by a new posterity.

* Delort, *Détention des Philosophes*, Vol. I, p. 53.

Nevertheless, certain cases seem to have been definitely lost in the court of mankind, and I find myself constrained to rank with these the case of Foucquet. He was an embezzler, and was definitely condemned on this point—condemned without appeal. As for extenuating circumstances, it is not difficult to find them. Illustrious examples, even more, perpetual solicitings and the impossibility of observing any regularity in troubled times, impelled him to steal, both for the State and for certain great men. Of his thefts he kept something ; he kept too much. He was guilty, doubtless, but his fault seems greatly mitigated when one remembers the circumstances and the spirit of the time.

I am going to say something which is a kind of rehabilitation of Nicolas Foucquet's memory ; I will say it in two charming lines which are attributed to Pellisson, and which appear to have been written by Foucquet's friend, the fabulist. Pellisson, in an epistle to the King, said of Foucquet :

*D'un esprit élevé, négligeant l'avenir,
Il toucha les trésors, mais sans les retenir.*

This it is which redeems and exalts this man. He was liberal, he loved to give, and he knew how to give, and let it not be said in the name of any morbid and morose morality that, even if he had taken the State's money without retaining it, he

was only the more guilty, uniting prodigality to unscrupulousness. No, his liberality remains honourable ; it showed that the principle which prompted his embezzlements was not a vile one, that, if this man was ruined, the cause of his ruin was not natural baseness, but the blind impulse of a naturally magnificent temperament. Thus Foucquet will live in history as the consoler of the aged Corneille, and the tactful patron of La Fontaine.

No one will deny his faults, the crimes he committed against the State, but for a moment one may forget them, and say that what was truly noble, and even nobly foolish in his temperament, half atones for the evil which has been only too thoroughly proved.

PART II

THE CHÂTEAU DE VAUX



DURING his trial Foucquet declared that he had begun the building of his house at Vaux as early as 1640. On this point his memory betrayed him. Reference to the inscription on an engraving by Pérelle, after Israël Silvestre, assigns the commencement of work upon the house to the year 1653, but there is no doubt that Israël Silvestre planned the château on lines which were not absolutely final. Nor was the *ne varietur* plan, signed in 1666, exactly followed.*

It is not until 1657 that the registers of the parish of Maincy attest the presence of foreign workmen who had come to undertake certain building operations on the estate of Vaux.

The architect, Louis Levau, employed by Foucquet, was not a beginner. He had already built "a house at the apex of the island of Notre-

* Bonnaffé, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

Dame,"* which is none other than the Hôtel Lambert,† the ingenious novelties of which were greatly admired. Especially noteworthy was the chamber of Madame de Torgny, on the second floor, which Le Sueur had decorated with a grace which recalls the mural paintings of Herculaneum. This chamber was called the Italian room, "Because," said Guillet de Saint-Georges, "the beauty of the woodwork and the richness of the panelling took the place of tapestry."

Levau, born in 1612, was forty-three years of age when he signed the *ne varietur* plan. We know little about the life of this man whose work is so famous. A document of the 23rd of March, 1651,‡ describes him as "a man of noble birth, Councillor and Secretary to the King, House and Crown of France." He then lived in Paris, in the Rue du Roi-de-Sicile, with his wife and his three young children, Jean, Louise and Nicolas.

Besides the Hôtel Lambert and the Château de Vaux, we are indebted to him for the design for the Collège des Quatre-Nations, now the Palace of

* Guillet de Saint-Georges, in *Les Archives de l'Art français*, 1853, Vol. III.

† Occupied successively by the President of the Chambre des Comptes, Lambert Torgny; the Marquise du Chastelle; M. de La Haye; the Comte de Montalivet; the Administrator of Lits Militaires; and Prince Adam Czartoryski, the present owner (1888).

‡ Cf. Jal., Dict.

the Institute ; the Maison Bautru, called by Sauval "La Gentille," and engraved by Marot ; the Hôtel de Pons, in the Rue du Colombier (to-day the Rue du Vieux-Colombier), built for President Tambruneau ; the Hôtel Deshameaux, which, according to Sauval, had an Italian room ; the Hôtel d'Heselin in the Ile Saint-Louis ; the Hôtel de Rohan, in the Rue de l'Université ; the Château de Livry, since known as Le Raincy, built for the Intendant of Finances, Bordier ; the Château de Seignelay ; a château near Troyes ; and the Château de Bercy.*

We may add that Louis Levau, having become first architect to the King, succeeded Gamard in directing the works of the church of Saint-Sulpice, and that he, in his turn, was succeeded by Daniel Gillard in 1660.†

Louis Levau died in Paris. His body was carried to the church of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, his parish church, on Saturday, the 11th October, 1670, as attested by the register of this church. There, under the above date, may be read : "On the said day was buried Messire Louys Levau, aged 57 or thereabouts, who died this morning at three o'clock. In his life a Councillor of the King in his Council, general Superintendent of His Majesty's buildings,

* Ad. Lance, *Dictionnaire des Architectes français*, Paris, 1872, 2 vols. Article on Levau (Louis).

† *Archives de l'Art français*, Vol. I, 1852.

first Architect of his buildings, Secretary to His Majesty and the House and Crown of France, etc., died in the Rue des Fossés, at the ancient Hôtel de Longueville.”*

* In the *Archives de l'Art français* (Vol. I) there is a document relating to Louis Levau :

“ There has been submitted to us the plan and elevation of the building of the Cathedral Church of Saint-Pierre of Nantes, of which the part not already constructed is marked in red. This church is one hundred and eleven feet high from the floor to the keystones of the vaults at the meeting of the diagonals, and the lower aisles and chapels are fifty-six feet, measured also from the floor.

“ It is desired to finish the said church, and to respect its symmetry as far as may be, and to make the lower aisles and chapels around the choir like those which are on the right of the nave.

“ The difficulty is that, in order to finish this work, it is necessary to pull down the walls of the town, and to carry it out into the moat, and it is desirable to take as little ground as can be, in order not to diminish too greatly the breadth of the moat. Wherefore it is proposed to do away with the three chapels behind the choir, marked by the letter H.

“ But, if those three chapels are removed, it will be seen that the flying buttresses which support the choir will not have the same thrust as those which support the nave ; the strength of these buttresses will be diminished, and the symmetry of the church destroyed, in a place where the church is most visible.

“ With this plan we send the elevation of the pillars and buttresses to show how they are constructed in the neighbourhood of the nave.

“ The whole of this is in order to ascertain whether the three chapels can be dispensed with, and the safety of the choir and the whole edifice secured.”

The following is in Levau's own hand :—

“ In order to reply to the above questions I, Le Vau, architect in ordinary of the King's buildings, certify that, having inspected

To create the estate of Vaux in its inordinate magnificence, it was necessary to destroy three villages : Vaux-le-Vicomte, with its church and its mill, the hamlet of Maison-Rouge and that of Jumeau. The gigantic works which were necessary are hardly imaginable ; immense rocks were carried away ; deep canals were excavated.

Foucquet hurried on the work with all the impatience of his unbridled spirit. As early as 1657 the animation which prevailed in the works was so great that it was spoken of as something immoderate, and more befitting royalty. Foucquet felt that it was of importance to conceal proceedings which gave the impression of enormous expenditure. He wrote on the 8th of February, 1657 :

“ A gentleman of the neighbourhood, who is called Villevessin, told the Queen that he was lately

the plan and the elevation of the flying buttresses of the church of Nantes, which have been sent me, having carefully examined and considered the whole, and having even made some designs for altering and dispensing with the chapels H H H ; after having considered all that can be done in this matter, I have come to the conclusion that it cannot be accomplished without weakening and considerably damaging the pillars of the choir, and the other aisles, and destroying all symmetry ; in a word, ruining it. I therefore do not submit the design that I have made, for my opinion is that the original design should be followed, and that the church should be finished as it was begun ; as nothing else can be done save to the great prejudice of the said church. In attestation of which I sign.

“ LE VAU.”

at Vaux, and that in the workshop he counted nine hundred men. In order to avoid this as far as may be, you must carry out my design of putting up screens, and keeping the doors shut. I should be glad if you would advance all the work as far as possible before the season when everybody goes into the country, and I want you to avoid, as far as possible, having a large number of workpeople together.”*

If we compare the statement made by M. de Villevessin with a note written by Foucquet on the 21st of November, 1660, we may conclude that at one time there were eighteen thousand workmen occupied on the buildings and the gardens.†

Such works could not be kept secret. Colbert, jealous for his King and perhaps for himself, came to visit them in secret. Watel, Foucquet’s steward—he who later entered the King’s service, the story of whose death is well known—Watel, faithful servant, surprised Colbert making his inspection, and told his master. Foucquet took some precautions, but none the less the matter created a bad impression at Court. One day when the King, with Monsieur, was inspecting the building operations at the

* Letter cited by M. Pierre Clement, *Histoire de Colbert*, p. 30.

† I cite almost literally a phrase by M. Eugène Grézy. M. Grézy’s valuable work on the Château de Vaux is contained in *Les Archives de l’Art français*, Vol. I, p. 1 et seq.

Louvre, he complained to his brother that he had no money to complete this great building. Whereupon Monsieur replied jokingly: "Sire, Your Majesty need only become Superintendent of Finance for a single year, and then you will have plenty of money for building."*

These immense works necessitated great institutions. At Maincy Foucquet founded a hospital called *La Charité*, where the workmen were received when they were ill.†

Tapestry looms were also established at Maincy. There, according to Le Brun's designs, were executed *Les Chasses de Méléagre* and *l'Histoire de Constantin*.‡

Le Brun himself settled at Maincy, with his wife Suzanne, in the autumn of 1658.

This great artist did not merely provide cartoons for tapestry; he decorated the ceilings of the halls of the château with allegorical paintings. Several pieces of sculpture also were executed from his drawings. Thus the four lions which are still seen at the foot of the staircase leading to the great

* Cimber et Danjou, *Archives curieuses de l'Histoire de France*, Second Series, Vol. VIII, p. 415 (Portraits de la Cour).

† M. Eugène Grévy, loc. cit., p. 7.

‡ It is well known that the Maincy factory, taken to Paris by order of the King after Foucquet's disgrace, became the Gobelins. (Lacordaire, article on the Gobelins, second ed., 1855, p. 65.) Cf. also *L'Histoire de la Tapisserie*, by J. Guiffrey.

Terrace des Grottes were designed by the painter ; or, at least, so says Mlle de Scudéry. These lions have almost human countenances. We know that the art of the seventeenth century was very free in its treatment of wild animals. The face of one expresses pride as well as gentleness. Lying in its innocent claws is a squirrel, pursued by a viper. Colbert again !

Now I must recall the great days of Vaux. They were not many, and the last was the most brilliant.

After the marriage of the King and the Infanta at Saint-Jean-de-Luz,* the Court took the road to Paris. It halted at Fontainebleau, and Foucquet received it at Vaux with that audacious magnificence which he preferred even to the realities of power. The courtiers walked in the gardens, where the fountains were playing, and a wonderful supper was served. The gazetteer Press has preserved for us a list of the fruits and flowers which adorned the tables, as well as "preserves of every colour, the fritters and pastries and other dishes which were served there."†

A year later the Château de Vaux received the widow of Charles I, Henriette de France, Queen of England. She was accompanied by her daughter, Henrietta of England, and the Duc d'Orléans, her

* 9th June, 1660.

† Cf. Loret, letter of the 24th July, 1660.

son-in-law. Henrietta, or, to give her her title, Madame, was in all the brilliance of her youth, and had a genius both for affairs of gallantry and matters of State. She lived as though in haste, consuming in coquetry and in intrigue a life which was not destined to be long. A woman of this character, so nearly related to the King, was bound to interest the ambitious Foucquet. He received her with all the refinements of magnificence. After dinner he had a comedy played before her. The piece was by Molière himself, who was already greatly admired for his naturalness and truth to life. The play was then completely new ; it had not been seen either by the town or the Court. It was *L'École des Maris*.*

Shortly afterwards the Château of Vaux was to witness a yet more brilliant festivity—the last of all. When Foucquet invited the King, he was possessed by a spirit of unwisdom and of error ; all about him, men and things alike, cried out to him in vain : Blind ! blind !

The King set out from Fontainebleau on the 17th of August, 1661, and came to Vaux in a coach, in which he was accompanied by Monsieur, the Comtesse d'Armagnac, the Duchesse de Valentinois and the Comtesse de Guiche. The Queen-Mother came in her own coach, and Madame in her litter. The young Queen, detained at Fontainebleau by her

* Cf. Loret, letter of the 17th July, 1661.

pregnancy, was not present at that cruel festival. More than six thousand persons were invited. The King and the Court began by visiting the park. All were loud in their admiration of the great fountains. "There was," says La Fontaine,* "great discussion as to which was the best, the Cascade, the Wheat-Sheaf Jet, the Fountain of the Crown or the Animals." The château also was inspected and Le Brun's pictures greatly admired.

The King could ill contain his wrath at a display of luxury which seemed stolen from him, and which he was later on to imitate at Versailles, with all the diligence of a good pupil. He was angered, so it is said,† by an allegorical picture into which Le Brun had obviously introduced the portrait of Mademoiselle de la Vallière. The fact may be doubted, but it is certain that the courtiers, with eyes sharpened by envy, remarked on all the panelling Foucquet's device: "*Quo non ascendam*," or *Quo non ascendet?* accompanying a squirrel (or *foucquet*) climbing up a tree. Louis XIV, according to Choisy, conceived the idea of arresting his insolent subject on the spot, and it was the Queen-Mother, who had long been Foucquet's friend, who prevented him from doing so. But such impatience is not consistent with that patient duplicity which the King dis-

* Letter to Maucroix, 9th ed., cited Vol. III, p. 301.

† Choisy, in his *Mémoires*. Ed. cited p. 587.

played in this matter. Almost at that very moment, did he not ask his hospitable subject for another festival to celebrate the churching of the young Queen ?*

After the château and grounds had been visited, there was a lottery in which every guest won something : the ladies jewels, the men weapons. Then a supper was served, provided by Watel, the cost of which was valued at one hundred and twenty thousand livres. "Great were the delicacy and the rarity of the dishes," says La Fontaine, "but greater still the grace with which Monsieur le Surintendant and Madame la Surintendante did the honours of their house." The pantry of the château then contained at least thirty-six dozen plates of solid gold and a service of the same metal.† After supper the guests went to the Fir-Tree Grove, where a stage had been erected.

Mechanical stage effects were then much in vogue. Those of Vaux were wonderful. The mechanism was the work of Torelli, and the scenery was painted by Le Brun.

Deux enchanteurs pleins de savoir
Firent tant, par leur imposture,
Qu'on crut qu'ils avaient le pouvoir
De commander à la nature.

* Cf. La Fontaine, letter previously cited.

† Cf. Chéruef, loc. cit., who cites (Vol. II, p. 223) the portfolios of Vallant, Vol. III, in the Biblio. Nat. MSS.

L'un de ces enchanteurs est le sieur Torelli,
Magicien expert et faiseur de miracles ;
Et l'autre, c'est Lebrun, par qui Vaux embelli
Présente aux regardants mille rares spectacles.*

Rocks were seen to open, and statues moved.

The scene represented a grim rock in a lonely desert. Suddenly the rock changed to a shell, and, the shell having opened, there came forth a nymph. This was Béjart, who recited a prologue by Pellisson. "In this prologue, Béjart, who represents the nymph of the fountain where the action is taking place, commands the divinities, who are subject to her, to leave the statues in which they are enshrined, and to contribute with all their power to His Majesty's amusement. Straightway the pedestals and the statues which adorn the stage move, and there emerge from them, I know not how, fauns and bacchantes, who form a ballet. It is very amusing to see a god of boundaries delivered of a child which comes into the world dancing."

The ballet was followed by the play which had been conceived, written and rehearsed in a fortnight. It was Molière's *Les Fâcheux*. The play, as we know, has interludes of dancing, and concludes with a ballet. "It is Terence," was the verdict. No doubt, but it is a devilish bad Terence.

The night was one of those fiery nights of which

* La Fontaine, letter from Maucroix, Vol. III, p. 304.

Racine writes in the most worldly of his tragedies. Fireworks shot into the air. There was a rain of stars; then, when the King departed, the lantern on the dome which surmounted the château burst into flames, vomiting sheaves of rockets and fiery serpents. We know what a sad morrow succeeded that splendid night.

My task is completed.

Madame Foucquet, of whose biography we have already given an outline, obtained a legal separation of her property from her husband's before the sentence of the 19th of December, 1664. She was able to retain a considerable part of her fortune. "On the 19th of March, 1673, she bought back from the creditors, for one million two hundred and fifty thousand livres, the Viscounty of Melun, with the estate of Vaux, and made a donation thereof to her son, Louis-Nicolas Foucquet, by various deeds, dated 1683, 1689, 1703. Her son having died without posterity in 1705, she sold the estate on the 29th of August, 1705, to Louis-Hector, Duc de Villars, Marshal of France, who parted with it on the 27th of August, 1764, to C.-Gabriel de Choiseul, Duc de Praslin and peer of France, for one million six hundred thousand livres."* The château remained

* See the excursion made by the subscribers to *l'Ami des Monuments* to the Château de Vaux-le-Praslin, or le Vicomte, near Melun, in *l'Ami des Monuments*, a magazine founded and edited by M. Charles Normand, 1887, p. 301, No. 4.

in the family of Choiseul-Praslin until the 6th of July, 1875.

By a piece of good fortune it then passed into the hands of M. A. Sommer. From that day one may say that art and letters have been vigilant in its preservation, for M. Sommer combines the most perfect taste with a love of art, and Madame Sommer is the daughter of M. de Barante, the famous historian.*

But for M. Sommer it was not enough to preserve this historical monument. His artistic munificence was prepared for any sacrifice in order to restore those cascades and grottos at which La Fontaine had marvelled, and which had fallen into ruins, and been overgrown with brushwood, in which vipers lurked and rabbits burrowed. In this noble task M. Sommer was fortunately aided by a learned architect, M. Destailleurs. M. Rodolphe Pfnor, my collaborator and friend, holds it an honour to associate himself with the praises which I here bestow upon the discriminating liberality of M. Sommer. M. Pfnor, by reason of his skill in architecture and the arts of design, is competent to

* In the Château de Vaux one of the rooms on the first story, and certainly the most beautiful, bears the name of the "Room of M. de Barante." It has a ceiling which represents one of those nymphs of Vaux which La Fontaine celebrated so charmingly. This ceiling has been recently restored. M. Destailleurs has displayed great art in its preservation.

give these praises a real and absolute value. Be it understood that I speak for him as well as for myself.

It is just that art and letters should unite in congratulating M. Sommier. The restorer of the Château de Vaux has deserved well of both. It was reserved for him to realize in all its splendour *Le Songe de Vaux*. He has uttered the command in a voice which has been obeyed :

Fontaines, jaillissez,
Herbe tendre, croissez
Le long de ces rivages.
Venez, petits oiseaux,
Accorder vos ramages
Au doux bruit de leurs eaux.

THE END

APPENDIX

TRANSLATION OF VERSES QUOTED IN THE CHÂTEAU DE VAUX-LE-VICOMTE

Pages 124, 125 :

MME FOUCQUET

How happy is my son, and how dear his prison to me !
For at least he is rid of that deadly poison.
His mind, enlightened now by his present woes,
Perceives how at Court he had been led astray.
I pray that God's grace so ope his eyes
That henceforth he shall turn them to Heaven alone.

THE QUEEN MOTHER

He may, though Colbert war upon him,
Still cast his glance towards this world.

MME FOUCQUET

If the world, Madam, with peril threatens,
I'd rather see him dead at my feet to-day.

(The abominable book of 1665 which was read in manuscript in society, under the name of Molière (a comedy in verse on the trial of Fouquet), discovered and published from a contemporary copy by Louis Auguste Ménard. Paris, Firmin Didot and Co., 1883 ; 2 vols. Vol. II, p. 116.)

Page 153, note :

Must it not be confessed
That in him is found what was hoped for :
That he is the Superintendent men desired.
No one of him complains, and all unite in praise.

Page 153, note :

Messire Nicolas Foucquet, Chevalier, Vicomte de Melun et de Vaux, Minister of State, Superintendent of His Majesty's Finances and His Majesty's Attorney-General in the Parliament of Paris.

Page 154, note :

If his fealty seemed unequalled
In his guardianship of the State,
Now his prudence is no less wondrous
In increasing its splendour.

Note :

How great his probity, his learning and his zeal,
And how generous he is, kindly and prudent,
How clear-headed and passing trustworthy :
These the qualities that have made him Superintendent.

Page 155, note :

To what height of honour shall he not attain,
If his courage ever exalts him ?
His reputation and character give him the opportunity
To aspire to all and all to deserve.

Page 159 :

I'll come at an hour that suits us both,
And, if I find that you are engaged,
I will quietly bide your leisure
Within that splendid room
To which have been brought,
At great expense, of late,
(Not without trouble and cost)

The coffin, tomb, or bier
Of Kephrim and Kiopes, the Kings.
As for the Kings they now are dust :
And that is the point I wished to make.
I had to entertain myself,
And noted the ancient monuments
While to affairs of State
You gave your whole attention.
(Assuredly I enjoyed them much
For does it not strike you that the presentment
Of a rather amatory personage
Is used to adorn these tombs ?)
To tell you the plain truth,
I could not help laughing at it.
Messire Horus, said I,
You maze us, one and all :
The children in your country
Wear, it strikes me, pinafores
Which seem to me very oddly cut.
I would have had this explained
But that I had to leave your place
Without understanding the allegory.
So I left the gallery,
Maugre disappointment, well pleased
With Kiopes and Kephrim,
With Horus and all his line,
As well as many other dignitaries.
In your home may these Egyptians,
Be they kings or be they gods,
Undisturbed and unconstrained,
Repose upon their bases,
Till mankind ends !
They have travelled far enough
For people of their size.
And you, Monseigneur, for whom works Time,
Time, which can all things destroy,
You, whom seeks to charm
Antiquity worshipped of men,

For whom Cleopatra's god,
 Landed at last within our walls,
 Has come from Memphis to St. Mandé—
 May you see all these beauteous things
 During many and many springs of roses.

Page 171 :

Ay, generous patron of all our poets,
 You restore my strength when you favour me,
 And I mean that all the future shall know
 That your kindly glances have revived me.

.

I feel once more the fire, the spirit,
 That inspired Rodrigue's plaints and made Horace fight,
 And my hand is again that which limned
 Great Pompey's soul and Cinna's brain.
 I pray you choose any name in history
 Which you desire to place in the Temple of Fame,
 Any favourite name you care to snatch
 From the night of the grave, the ashes of the pyre.
 Even if must be dimmed of Æneas and Achilles
 By stout attack on Homer and Virgil,
 Or that I must, with failing hand,
 Relegate to obscurity those whom
 On the stage I delivered from death,
 You shall find me as I was, and shall own,
 If ever your great mind to the full inspire me,
 That fifty years and more have not quite annulled
 The happy mingling of power and clarity
 The secret mastery of fair seeming
 Which Art and Nature combined to give me.
 But do not expect that I shall be so bold
 Either to describe, still less to applaud you.
 That would be to pretend that at a glance
 I fathomed the greatness of your soul,
 That a glimpse sufficed for mine aged eyes
 To discern in you heaven's shining gifts

Whose dazzling and incessant light
As soon as you appear makes eyelids close.
Much indeed did I apprehend in that lucky moment :
I beheld you magnanimous, affable, generous,
And, what scarce one sees after ten years of apologies,
Suddenly I beheld you liberal to the Muses.

Page 173 :

No matter how dread plague's ravages here, .
Absence, to lovers, is deadlier still.

Master Corneille the elder
Has recently entrusted
To the actors of Bourgogne
His latest work or job,
A mighty, and outstanding work,
Which *Œdipus* is called.
A dramatic work, I repeat,
But so tender, so pathetic,
That, without being deeply moved,
One cannot hear or see it.
Never, in a work of this sort,
Was the dialogue so telling ;
Never on earth, it is said,
Were such glorious lines heard.

Page 179 :

Much more might I add,
But to that attractive personage
Praise makes no appeal ;
He cares naught for that addressed to him.
He dislikes being lauded,
And on this point, I own,
That worthy Master Pellisson
Has more than once reproved me ;
But as his wondrous merit
So powerfully moves my heart,
And that praise of him is dear to me,
I shall find it difficult to refrain.

Page 181 :

I confess it, it is the simple truth,
 That Monseigneur more than deserves
 The pension he insists on my paying him.
 And, in truth, I know no one
 To whom, in our days, Phœbus would promise
 To bestow it more readily than on him.

.

In order to remit this one every year,
 I shall need four terms of equal days :
 On Midsummer Day I bind myself to madrigals,
 Short, well turned, and daintily brief :
 For long poems are not good in summer.
 October's master shall next have his turn :
 My Muse then intends to take pains.
 Our hero shall, unless fine weather fail,
 Have full vintage of miscellaneous verse.
 Pray do not say that will be meagre gift,
 For such verse is all the mode just now.
 For New Year's Day a ballad is intended,
 For all the year shall laugh who laughs that day.

.

Easter, as a holy day, calls for other verse,
 So, if God spare me, I shall then send you,
 To complete the pension,
 A sonnet replete with devotion.
 That instalment may prove the hardest :
 I do not write much on such subjects,
 But at least I shall do my best,
 And, if I fail, send the police after me,
 And forthwith cause to be seized
 Stanzas, roundels and all manner of verse.
 These are our wealth : for learned fosterlings
 Naught amass save verse only.

Page 182 :

Queen of Hearts, exquisite being,
Whom follows the Child here adored,
Called Paphos, Amathus or Cythera,
You who charm both gods and men,
May you charm them a century hence.

Page 183 :

Before me, Notary on Parnassus,
Appeared the Queen of Fair Women
And Perfect Exemplar of all virtues,
Who read these lines, and having counted,
Weighed, revised, approved and praised them,
Agreed to take them for the tribute past,
But reserving the customary tribute
For the future on the terms stipulated.
Muses of Vaux, and you, their scribe,
Here is the receipt such as you desired.
May you do as much a hundred years hence.

With my two eyes, or with my two suns,
I've read your lines thought unmatched,
And in which naught is there to offend me.
I hold you quit and promise to furnish you
Wherewith everywhere to pay it,
As regards the past, but not the future.
And may you do as much in a hundred years.

Page 184 :

I must tell you girding at the number
Is not to your advantage, Monseigneur . . .

Page 187 :

A fresh bloom of spring,
A new-found star, a light,
Such is witching Du Fouilloux,
Of whom many fair ones are jealous,
The more that this damosel

Is charming, brilliant and fair,
 With Love for her escort
 Has now been presented at Court,
 And this week assumed the title
 Of Maid of Honour to the Queen.

Page 188 :

Fouilloux, one of the three maids,
 Fair is she among the fair,
 By her ever triumphant charms
 Swept all hearts away.

Page 189 :

Fouilloux, not striving to charm,
 None the less most witching is
 With her free and lovely ways.
 Rash is it to attempt
 Her coldness to break down.
 Had my heart not been enslaved
 Her beauty would have captured it.

The whole Court is bewitched
 By the glorious charms
 With which you enthrall all eyes,
 Menneville ; my own freedom
 Should own fealty to you ;
 But my heart's already given,
 So no room is there for you.

Page 190 :

Your faces hide, maids of the Queen,
 Little ones,
 For Menneville has returned,
 My love.

Page 199 :

That renowned statesman
 Whose kindness has charmed me,
 That great and judicious man

Whom men call Monseigneur Foucquet,
So generous, so open-handed,
No longer is Procurator-General.
Another sapient man,
Master Harlay is he called,
Is, after his resignation,
Now installed in office.

Page 204 :

What need for me to describe
Confinement closer than yet known :
Walled chamber, narrow cell,
For comfort sole a little air ;
Days that are sunless,
Nights that are sleepless ;
Three doors in six-foot space !
To describe such a lodging
Would cause your tears to flow ;
I have done it without thinking,
For that plaint has charms for me.

Page 207 :

Grasping and base Minister, wretched slave,
Who groans under weight of public affairs,
Victim sacrificed to political troubles,
Phantom revered under a crushing title.

See how dangerous is the summit of honours ;
Look upon the fatal relics of Foucquet,
And while in secret you seek to destroy him,
Beware lest a worse fate yet await you.

Like him, some day, you too may fall ;
Fear your post, your rank, the Court and Fortune's self,
For one falls innocent from where you have risen.

Cease, then, to urge your prince to punish him,
And soon yourself in need of all his mercy,
Do not let him enforce his might of justice.

Page 207 :

In vain, to shake your devoted constancy,
 Did we see force and might assail you ;
 In vain within the Bastille were you fetter-laden,
 In vain they sought to catch you with divers baits ;
 Your great heart, contemning alike harshness and favours,
 Triumphed over force and scorned all pledges ;
 And as a mighty rock by storms assaulted
 Scorns the arrogance of mighty billows,
 And sees the baffled tempest's effort break at its feet,
 So, Pellisson, does, in adversity,
 Your great heart preserve its tenacity,
 And your friendship, constant and loving,
 Rise victorious from midst of danger.

Page 208 :

Our King who, through policy,
 Was on his way to Brittany,
 For reasons unknown
 Is, we are told, hasting back.
 I have had no message
 Telling the reasons of the trip ;
 But current report informs me
 —That is, all Paris says—
 That by special warrant
 The Sieur Superintendent of France,
 I know not how nor why,
 Is imprisoned at this very time,
 (A most amazing piece of news)
 In the city and castle of Nantes.
 Truly I have ever respected
 The orders of His Majesty,
 And believed our august monarch
 Ordered only that which is right ;
 But remembering very well
 That this unhappy prisoner
 Ever seemed to me wise and kind,
 And that with obliging words

He at times honoured me,
 I own I was grieved at the news,
 Unable, without undue constraint,
 To prevent my heart pitying him.
 If, with all due respect to the King,
 (And I say it in all good faith)
 I could do him any service
 And lighten his hard fate
 By softening its rigour,
 I'd do it with all my heart ;
 Yet the mere wish is vain,
 And we must pray God to console him.
 In the condition he now is in,
 That is all I can do for him.

Page 209 :

Both through reason and pity,
 And even for what these entail,
 I pass all over in silence.

Page 211 :

Fill the air with your plaints in your grottos deep,
 Weep, Nymphs of Vaux, and swell your streams,
 And let o'erflowing Anqueil ravage the treasures
 With which Flora's glances have adorned your banks.
 No one shall blame your innocent tears,
 So may you freely yield to your urgent grief ;
 All men look to you for that sympathetic act :
 The Fates content : misfortune has smitten Orontes.*
 You saw him of yore by your fountains' rims,
 Who, fearless of Fate's inconstant favour,
 Splendid and glorious, adored by men,
 Accepted honours due to the gods alone.
 Alas, how great the fall from fortune supreme !
 How changed you will find him from what he was !
 For him the fairest days are but repeated nights,

* Variant : The Cabal is satisfied : Orontes is struck down.

Carking cares, regrets and worries,
 These, the dismal dwellers in his dark abode,
 Into depths of woe continually plunge him.
 Such the abyss wherein have cast him
 Prosperity's alluring charms !
 Common enough in royal courts is this result :
 Too familiar there are Fortune's changes,
 Its deceitful favours, its inconstant lures :
 But one knows them only when too late,
 When with widespread sail on that sea one steers,
 Believing the stars and winds to be propitious.
 Hard indeed it is to rule one's desires ;
 So the wisest trusts to the favour of the breeze.
 Never does a favourite set limits to his success,
 Never looks back on what he has left behind ;
 And the fruitless love of grandeur and applause
 Forsakes him only after it has struck him down.
 Were not the many proofs told in history
 Sufficient without Orontes having to fall ?

Ah, if only he had not revelled in that seeming success !
 If to dwell in Vaux had been but his utmost desire,
 How gently would his years have flowed on !
 Ye have not in your homes that splendid attendance,
 That swarm of people who day by day proceed
 To salute in throngs the Luminary of the Court :
 But Heaven's grace gives you in return
 Repose, leisure, obscurity, silence,
 Unbroken sleep, simple-hearted conversation,
 But never at Court are these joys to be found.
 Let us leave these thoughts : Orontes summons us.
 Ye, whose home he made so fine,
 Nymphs, who owe to him your fairest charms,
 If along your banks Louis should stray,
 Try to soften him, to relax his angry mood ;
 He loves his people ; he is just ; he is wise ;
 Make him aspire to be termed clement ;
 For clemency makes monarchs equal with the gods.

Let him study magnanimous Henri's* life
 Who, able to revenge himself, desired it not.
 Inspire in Louis equal mercy ;
 No victory so fine as that o'er one's own heart
 Orontes now does clemency deserve
 What though he yielded to promptings of unchecked power,
 His hard fate is punishment sufficient,
 And to be unfortunate is to be innocent.†

Page 213 :

He hates living so long after such a fall,
 And has no hope but in his grief :
 That is the sole joy that stirs his courage,
 For all other relief is forbidden him.
 Such is the result of an ambition
 Which is the sole passion of his like.

. . . alone Orontes, raised up by thee,
 Pines in sorrow wearisome,
 And Nature's lavish gifts
 On him no more are now bestowed.
 Thou canst, with one lightning flash,
 Forthwith to dust reduce him ;
 But though the gods to thy mighty power
 No bounds thought fit to set,
 The wider the limits of thy greatness
 The narrower should be thy wrath's.

Fare forth to punish the Tiber's pride ;
 And remind it that its laws
 Of yore freedom denied to all
 Save to Gallic bravery.

* Variant : Let him study the life of the great, great Henri.

† Version by one of Foucquet's enemies to replace the passage
 beginning : Such the abyss wherein have cast him
 Prosperity's alluring charms.

But within thy realm be debonair ;
 To a rule so severe
 Thou canst not conform thyself,
 For thee it would be over great constraint :
 Let foreigners rightly dread thee,
 But let thy subjects love thee.

Page 214 :

Of clemency love is the son,
 And of the gods she the daughter is ;
 She absent, their mightiest power
 Becomes but an abhorred name.
 Of all the fruits of victory,
 Cæsar, with glory crowned,
 Found none whose sweetness
 Could equal clemency,
 Not even on Pharsala's field
 Where he was honoured as conqueror.
 Leave him for sole boon
 A comfort that cannot last,
 Now that he has lost the place
 Thy kindness made him expect.
 Grant to us what yet remains
 Of his life so sad and grieved,
 Days that are in sorrow wasting :
 Thus may thine golden be
 And be filled with joy
 Even beyond thy dearest wish.

Page 232 :

Lofty minded, careless of the future,
 He handled treasures but retained them not.

Page 244 :

Two wizards, with wisdom filled,
 Wrought so well by their artifice
 That men forthwith did believe
 They could make Nature obey.

Torelli one of these wizards is,
Expert magician and wonder-worker ;
The other, Lebrun, by whose art Vaux adorned
Offers to the eye store of wondrous forms.

Page 248 :

Gush forth, ye fountains,
And grow, thou tender grass,
Along those banks so fair.
And hither come, ye birds,
In concert your songs to warble
To the sweet murmurs of the waters.

